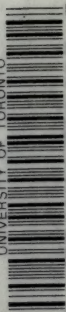


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# The Marble City

G.B.Burgin

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THE MARBLE CITY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE MAN WHO DIED  
A WILFUL WOMAN  
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A SON OF MAMMON  
THE WAY OUT  
THE PERSON IN THE HOUSE  
THE TIGER'S CLAW  
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THE CATTLE MAN  
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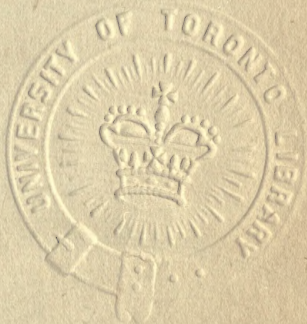


# THE MARBLE CITY

BY  
G. B. BURGIN

*Author of*

"THE HERMIT OF BONNEVILLE," "THE SHUTTERS OF  
SILENCE," ETC., ETC.



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To  
THE LORD BISHOP OF RIPON.

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*My dear Lord Bishop,*

*Here is a story of quaint folk, dwellers  
in the Land of Accanada. I dedicate this tale to you because,  
when the inevitable happens, and in the hurry and rush of  
modern life it is forgotten, I shall at least have had the  
pleasure of its being associated with one who not only  
"allures to brighter worlds," but "leads the way."*

*Believe me,*

*My dear Lord Bishop,*

*Very faithfully yours,*

THE AUTHOR.





# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
PROLOGUE - - - - -	I
I. THE SCHOOLHOUSE - - - - -	14
II. COMPLICATIONS - - - - -	27
III. DISASTER - - - - -	39
IV. "THE VALLEY OF THE SHADDER" - - - - -	52
V. SETTLING DOWN - - - - -	66
VI. "ROUND THE SQUARE" - - - - -	84
VII. MAN AND MAID - - - - -	105
VIII. THE RIVALS - - - - -	116
IX. THE "DRAGON" POOL - - - - -	131
X. JULIUS DREX - - - - -	148
XI. THE SECRET - - - - -	164
XII. "THE PILGRIM OF PAIN" - - - - -	179
XIII. ANGELA EXPERIMENTS - - - - -	199
XIV. JEALOUSY - - - - -	230
XV. THE MARBLE CITY - - - - -	244
XVI. RENUNCIATION - - - - -	260
XVII. THE PASSING OF CELIMÉ - - - - -	276
XVIII. FORGIVENESS - - - - -	291





# THE MARBLE CITY

## PROLOGUE

"INJUN JOE" boasted a certain dignity, even when drunk; but the dignity failed to apply to his legs, the movements of which were very devious indeed as he came through the bushes, and vainly endeavoured to understand why the trees performed a war-dance for his especial benefit. The brambles, too, scratched his face with irritating persistency, whilst rotten stumps continually tripped him up in the most uncalled-for manner.

Unable to understand the reason for this unprovoked malignity of inanimate things, Injun Joe philosophically leaned his back against the trunk of a pine, and, waving a nearly empty whisky-bottle skywards, somewhat incoherently besought the Great Manitou to vouchsafe him an explanation; for it had utterly slipped his memory that he

## The Marble City

had started out from Four Corners the day before with two bottles of whisky. At intervals, he seemed vaguely to remember that it was "Old Man" Evans who had so generously supplied him with "fire-water," in direct contravention of a certain well-known statute and his own dignified position as sheriff.

Suddenly Injun Joe called to mind that he had taken Old Man Evans a big nugget of gold. Hence the latter's unwonted disregard for the laws which he was supposed to administer.

Injun Joe slid his back cautiously down the pine trunk until he reached the ground in a sitting posture. The White Man was very cunning, very strong, very rich; but he, Injun Joe, was more than a match for him.

When he wanted a "heap big drunk" again, he would get nuggets, and take them to Four Corners. The one thing for which these white men cared was gold.

Gold! He snorted with contempt. Did he not know where to find it by the bushel? But he must be careful.

Old Man Evans was very cunning, and with the aid of his one-eared mule—an unreasonable animal, which was prejudiced against all Indians—could puzzle out a trail a week old. Moved by this

knowledge, Injun Joe was confident that he had hidden his trail—that no human being could follow it, much less the aforesaid partial hybrid belonging to Old Man.

Had he not started from below Four Corners in the early dawn, painfully wading through the Ottawa shallows before beginning the journey on the bank? Five miles in the water; a leap upon an overhanging tree-trunk; thence into the trackless Bush. He smiled with saturnine satisfaction.

Even Old Man Evans' "powerful medicine" could not help him now. Stay! Was he so sure that he had started in the water? He knew that he had meant to do so. But had he? That last horn of whisky, when he bade Old Man good-bye, had been "heap strong." He seemed to remember having explained to Old Man, with much unnecessary detail, that he had found the nugget on the verge of a spring hard by the Marble City—that city of which even the memory had been lost to white men—that city which was known only to himself and one other degenerate remnant of his race.

Once upon a time, the story ran, a hundred years ago or more, the Great White Chief—a stron gold man, with a flowing beard—had built the Marble City. The tradition was that he found gold there,



## The Marble City

and also discovered a quarry of white marble. It was an autocratic whim of this Great White Chief to build every house of marble, so that when he passed away into the Land of the Ponemah, the Marble City should remain as an enduring monument of his own greatness and that of his hundred followers.

Although gold was plentiful, such was his power over them, he forbade his men to pick it up until they had built the Marble City. They obeyed him—toiled early and late, with the gold untouched beneath their feet. Sometimes, in laying the foundations of a house, they brushed it aside with marvellous self-restraint.

When the city was finished, and not until then, would they collect the precious metal, become wealthy beyond all measure.

At times, when they were tempted to forget their oath, there was that in the Great White Chief's fierce eyes which made them tremble. They were men of peace — carpenters, joiners, masons, builders — who had followed him into this unknown corner of the wilderness of Ontario.

When they had finished building the Marble City, they were to take all the gold they wanted, and leave him there without disclosing his secret to the world.

They were never to return, never to speak of the place, never to betray the secret.

And the Great White Chief had been obeyed to the letter. Each man, after taking all the gold he required, carefully covered up the traces of his digging before returning into the world with that fearful oath of secrecy upon his lips—an oath from which even death could not release him.

After the departure of his companions, the Great White Chief reigned alone over the Marble City—that city which was dexterously hidden in a deep ravine, with a shining little river by its side—and was never more seen of man.

Gradually the primeval forest overgrew it. From the gashed sides of the quarry rose stately pines and cedars. Green lichens stained the pure marble; here and there it gleamed whitely in the moonlight. The brown bear sunned himself upon marble roofs; chipmunks and squirrels, fierce wolverine and weasel ran over them, or hid within the empty chambers. Exposure to the air mellowed the marble in places until its pure whiteness changed to a delicate creamy yellow.

Now and again, Injun Joe, when he could tear himself away from the allurements of the whisky dens in Four Corners, came here by a secret

passage through the Bush to perform mysterious rites—rites whose original meaning he had long forgotten, but which had been handed down to him and his squaw, "Melon Seeds," now nearly as old and worthless as himself, with the same destructive craving for "fire-water"—a craving which Injun Joe never allowed her to indulge in as long as he needed whisky for himself.

With an effort, Injun Joe sprawled to his feet again. He must be moving, for there was yet half an hour's weary journeying along the secret track before he could reach the great rock which barred the entrance to the ravine.

As he blundered forward, his sight became dimmer than before; he panted with an ineffable longing for the cool waters of the deep little river which ran hard by the Marble City. Still clutching the whisky-bottle in his right hand, he staggered on. A dog trotted in front of him—a harmless, nondescript sort of dog, of no particular pretensions.

Presently Injun Joe discovered that there was something strange about this animal; it had two heads. The discovery worried him so much that he sat down again to think it out, and must have once more fallen asleep, for when he roused himself there was no dog. A bristling-quilled porcupine



surveyed him with unfriendly eyes from a stump opposite ; it seemed to be covered with thousands of quills—quills which it was ready to stick into him at a moment's notice.

He got up and crawled on ; but wherever he went, the porcupine sat in front of him, continuing to erect its sheaf of menacing quills. The two-headed dog reappeared, and slunk along beside the porcupine. Its two heads belonged to different kinds of dogs in a most unreasonable way. And still, neither the dog nor the porcupine condescended to explain their senseless hostility to a poor Indian, gloriously full of "fire-water."

At length the Indian's trembling hand swung aside the great rock ; his travel-worn feet brought him out from the solemn vastness of the primeval Bush into the equally solemn silence of the ravine. Below him, the river sparkled coldly in the moonlight.

Yes ; there was the row of marble houses, with a kind of temple at the end. He tottered down the secret path, and stood wearily by the side of the swiftly-flowing stream. Once more he was alone. He congratulated himself on being well rid of his fearsome companions.

"Ugh !" he murmured. "Ugh ! I hear voices in

the trees. They call me to go upon a long journey. I am tired. I will rest."

He held up the bottle in the moonlight with a fierce grunt of satisfaction, for fully an inch of "lightning-rod" remained within. Congratulating himself upon this unexpected good luck, he pulled out the cork, and was about to gulp down the whisky, when a skinny brown hand seized him by the shoulder, and made a frantic clutch at the bottle.

It was the hand of his squaw, Melon Seeds, whom he had left in the Marble City to guard their wigwam. He knew the fierce craving in her eyes as she tore the bottle from his grasp, and, with customary promptitude, struck her a heavy blow.

Melon Seeds, mad with longing for drink, gave vent to the inarticulate snarl of a wild beast, ran in upon her drunken lord and master, artistically knifed him through the heart, and picking up the whisky-bottle, avidly drank to his speedy departure for the Happy Hunting Grounds.

As soon as Melon Seeds had finished her brief drink, she looked down upon the dead body with fierce regret, for the squaw was more than astonished to think that in a moment of madness she had presumed to protest against the ill-treatment of

years. But the protest had been effectual; there was no doubt about that.

When Melon Seeds lifted up Injun Joe's right hand—that hand which had been so often raised to strike her—it fell limply by his side. Even in her grief, she remembered that the knife was a valuable one, removed the shining blade from the wound, and wiped it carefully on a tuft of grass.

When she had gloated over it, she recalled the rites due to the dead, and went down on her knees with a death-wail which floated through the ravine, filling the lonely night with despairing horror. Injun Joe had gone to his fathers, and she, Melon Seeds, had sent him there before his time. She was alone in the Marble City. Alone with—that!

The place swarmed with evil spirits—spirits against whom even the White Man's "medicine" was helpless. She feared lest they should enter into the body of Injun Joe and haunt her. She must dispose of it quickly; but how?

Taking a piece of rope, she fastened it round Injun Joe's waist, weighting the body with a heavy rock close by the stream. Even in her haste, she noticed a big nugget of gold beneath the piece of rock, and threw it contemptuously into the river. Then, dragging body and rock together, she pushed them



## The Marble City

in and peered over the brink. They sank with a splash.

Fearfully looking around her, Melon Seeds hastily gathered up her poor belongings and fled into the night.

Ten minutes after she had disappeared by a circuitous route known only to herself, Old Man Evans and his mule appeared on the brink of the ravine.

"Jusso," said Old Man, meditatively gazing at the marble roofs below, as he emerged from the secret passage. "I've heard tell of this place before. Jusso."

He gazed down upon the melancholy ravine with a chuckle of satisfaction at having solved the secret of the Marble City.

"Guess we're like Moses in the Wilderness, a-lookin' on the Promised Land; but there ain't no command that we 'shalt not go thither.' Come on, old woman. We'll 'thither' for all we're wuth, and see what's become of that rascally Injun. I knew we could foller him up all right. He was too blind drunk to hide his trail. Find out where he's gone."

The clay-coloured, angular-bodied mule lifted her one ear, looked at Old Man with her one working

eye, sniffed the track, rubbed a hairy cheek against her master's equally hirsute countenance, then deftly scrambled down the side of the ravine with the activity of a mountain sheep. Once at the bottom, she nosed the trail, and came upon the scene of the tragedy.

"The thing's as clear as daylight," her manner implied. "Why don't you ask me to do something really difficult?"

She sniffed at Melon Seeds' departing footsteps, but made no effort to follow them.

"Jusso," said Old Man, going down upon his knees, and carefully studying the footprints on the river-bank. "Jusso. You've hit it, old woman. They've had a row, and the squaw's knifed him. Here's where she jumped at him. Blood on the grass, too. She's picked up a rock, tied him to it, and heaved him into the river. Some day we'll fetch him out agin. I've often thought an Injun's skull 'ud look real tasty on a pole outside the shanty. But I don't know as I'm goin' to let a crowd of gold-seekers into this yer place and have 'em quarrel over 'the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lastin' hills,' as old Parson Trail calls 'em. No, sir. I've got

## The Marble City

religion, and I'm goin' to lie low about this yer place until I see what's best to be done. Maybe I was wrong to give that Injun whisky; maybe it was proverdential. But I can't ask him, and if I did, he couldn't tell me—now. Come on, old woman. We'll find out where the Great White Chief buried himself, and whether he left a will. Me bein' sheriff, so to speak, I takes possession in the name of the lawful heirs. That Injun's bin talkin' too much. If I ain't careful, we'll have the whole of Four Corners picnickin' out here. And that ain't to be thought of. Not much. They'd just heave nuggets at me to pay their fines, and the gaol couldn't hold 'em all."

He followed the mule as she went off towards the Marble City, the moonlight shining coldly down upon his keen eyes, his lithe, sinewy frame. Once he stopped to kick a bit of shining quartz out of his path with contemptuous indifference.

"Gold!" he said. "Gold! There was a time when I'd ha' sold my soul for you. I don't b'lieve no man's justerfied in lettin' you loose on Four Cornerites. They're bad enuff now; they'd be a heap wuss if they'd got you to help 'em fool round. Gosh! what's that?"

"Whoo-hoo-hoo-oo-hoo-oo!" The cry of a great



horned owl rang through the night, filling the ravine with a weird horror, a ghastly dread, as the squirrels crouched motionless, lest a moving branch should betray them to their fierce enemy.

Presently Old Man's keen eyes detected the velvet-winged bird on the top of a pine trunk. A branch rustled, and he was gone. Half a minute later, he sailed over the Marble City, carrying a helpless victim in his huge talons.

"Prezackly," said Old Man. "You're gittin' your supper. I want mine badly too, only 'taint no use hollerin' for it same as you;" and he went after the mule as she scrambled along the narrow ledge which led upwards to the houses.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SCHOOLHOUSE

"IF," asked young Mr. Fiske, "the off wheels hit against a log and this buckboard catapults me up into the air, is it expected to wait here for me until I come down again?"

"Why are you so inquisitive?" inquired Miss Drex, just shaving another log, with a carelessness too natural to be wholly convincing.

"Oh, nothing—nothing! Only, I seem to start from the front seat and come down on the back one. Sometimes I'm afraid I shan't come down on the back one—that's all."

"It depends how you time yourself," demurely observed Miss Drex, with a disapproving glance at the young Englishman's spick-and-span costume.

"And that depends on my backbone," retorted young Mr. Fiske. "I had a fairly good backbone when dad started me off from England; but a country like this takes it out of one."

"Takes out what? Your backbone?"

"No—springiness. Why does this thing pitch me up and then go on without waiting for me, when I come down with a dull, sickening thud? That's what I should like to know. It's so—so thoughtless of it."

"Perhaps my driving has something to do with it."

Young Mr. Fiske considered.

"Well, it is a bit like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi," he said ruefully. "The chap who drove furiously, you know, until he got upset, and they picked up the fragments that were left. There weren't many."

"I've not heard that version. What's wrong with my driving, that it worries you so?"

"It may be all right. I expect it's the custom of the country; but you take too many chances, and I don't seem to be quite used to it. There's a little too much variety in it. I can't answer your questions if I'm sticking in the fork of a tree and you're half a mile away. How am I to talk to you if I go off and you go on? That's what I'd like to know."

Angela Drex looked at him gravely.

"Haven't you been here long enough to know that a Canadian buckboard always waits for—Canadians."

"What does that mean?"



"Presumably, that if you miss it you are not a Canadian."

"Sometimes I do ; sometimes I don't. It takes prac— There we go again!" He saved himself with difficulty.

"That means you have not yet made up your mind."

"You should see England," he said discontentedly. "There we can talk when we're out driving. I've just bitten my tongue, and it hurts."

"I have every intention of seeing England—when I have time."

"When you have time! You don't realise what—"

"Yes; not before. It isn't a matter of life and death."

"Oh, come, I say, Miss Drex! Why, England's the centre of the—"

"Of the what?"

A wheel of the buckboard struck on a log, and he flew into the bushes. In that brief moment of physical elevation, young Mr. Fiske felt that he had never before been so near heaven.

Angela Drex pulled up the fiery pony and gravely waited for him. There was nothing in her beautiful dark eyes to show that she had purposely ejected her

somewhat bumptious young companion from the buggy.

He crawled out of the bushes, his neat parting rumpled, one lavender glove split.

"Was that an object lesson?" he asked good-humouredly, taking his place beside her again. "If so, I suppose I was the object. I wanted to impress the people at the schoolhouse with my get-up. Now, what will they think of me?"

"They will not think of you," Angela assured him, flicking away a fly from the pony's left ear. "Don't be so self-conscious. If you are, they will find you out. It is the morbid self-consciousness of Englishmen which will one day prevent Canadians from rescuing them when their empire is in danger."

"Aren't you—eh—pulling my leg?" asked young Mr. Fiske.

"I beg your pardon! I think not. I am merely quoting the *Four Corners Gazette*. What has that to do with your legs? Surely they haven't got into the papers; they're too thin."

"I mean, I'm afraid you're getting at me."

"Oh, no, I'm not. I was merely trying to explain that if you want Canadians to fight your battles for you, as you some day will, you mustn't patronise them—that's all."

The boy turned an amused glance from his beautiful companion to the Ottawa River. There was a raft in mid-stream, pulled along by a fussy little tug.

"The beastly tug spoils it," he said discontentedly. "The river wouldn't be half bad if that tug left off vomiting smoke."

"You are incorrigible."

"I didn't mean to be, but that tug's all over the place. You can't get away from it."

Angela flicked another fly from the pony.

"Canadians take larger views. There is only one discordant element in this beautiful scenery, and you ignore all the charm of the river for the sake of that tug. Do you always do that sort of thing?"

"Come, I say, Miss Drex," he remonstrated, with unflinching good-humour. "You must remember I haven't had your advantages. Besides, look at the mess I'm in. How can I be dispassionate when I've spoiled my get-up? I put these things on to do honour to the occasion when you show off the kiddies in the schoolroom before those confounded old trustees. Oughtn't I to take it out of something just to get even again?"

"If you do"—she gazed dreamily across the beautiful river at the little white houses on the opposite shore—"if you do, I'm very much afraid



you will go out of the buggy again, and that, as I am due at the schoolhouse in twenty minutes, I shall be unable to wait for you."

He laughed.

"Really, Miss Drex, did you upset me on purpose just now? Honest Injun!"

"Of course I did. You were so band-boxy and spick-and-span, and you don't suppose I was going to have you laughed at? You may live down a murder—in time—at Four Corners; but to be laughed at is fatal."

"I don't see anything to laugh at in my clothes. They're just what the average Englishman would wear on a festive occasion like this."

"Yes; but not the average Canadian. You don't seriously imagine that people in the heart of the Bush think it necessary to dress as if they were going to a Montreal garden-party?" She looked at him anxiously. "If so, you're hopeless."

"No, I'm not. I only wanted to be swagger, because you've got to make the thing a success. I was trying to dress up to you."

"Oh, what is to be done with you? Give me your gloves."

"They're no good now. One's split up the back."

## The Marble City

"So much the better." She threw them into the bushes. "Now, your hat, please."

"Oh, I say! Really, Miss Drex, I can't go without a hat. I shall get sunstroke. You mustn't throw it away, please!"

"It's not going to be thrown away. I only want to knock it in on each side. There— isn't that beautiful?"

"Simply villainous! Anyone would be justified in arresting me as a tramp."

"If you could but see yourself! It's so natural and easy—gives you such an air of graceful dignity."

"Anyway, it's a ruined hat. Makes me look as if I'd been up all night." But seeing her anxious eyes, he gave it a rakish slant over his left ear. "I'm willing to meet you half-way. Shall I break a boot-lace?"

"Oh, no; that's going from one extreme to the other. I wish you were a little more sunburned."

"Sunburned! Why?"

"You'd look as if you'd done something to justify your existence."

Young Mr. Fiske smiled; but the smile suddenly faded away as the buckboard struck another stump. He held on just in time.

"Do we get into the main road soon?" he asked

anxiously. "Pardon me for mentioning it, but there's a button come off. As the hymn-book says, there may be 'More and more, more and more; more and more to follow.'"

"Don't add irreverence to your insular peculiarities. We shall leave the corduroy track in about two minutes." She gravely produced a safety-pin. "Perhaps you may find this useful in an emergency."

He thanked her with great earnestness, loosely retied his elaborate neckgear in a free-and-easy sailor's knot, pulled off the top button of his light coat, and left the threads hanging loose. It took him a minute and a half of painful toil to turn down the ends of his trousers. While he was doing it, the motion of the buckboard severely bumped his knees against his chin, and made him bite his tongue again.

"Now," he said, with genuine satisfaction, "if I'd a big pipe, I should be all right. You"—his voice sank to an awe-struck whisper—"you don't expect me to chew?"

"Chew what?" she asked sharply. "Haven't you just lunched?"

"Tobacco."

"Now you're simply disgusting. If you don't apologise, I'll throw you out again."

## The Marble City

"And I thought I was growing up so nicely with the country," he explained. "I apologise. But I really can smoke, you know."

"I don't know. Still, you may light one of those effeminate little cigarettes of yours. It will answer the same purpose. A boy always looks good-tempered when he smokes. You will pass muster in the crowd, if you don't pretend you are insulted every time someone you don't know speaks to you as if he'd known you all his life."

"Am I at liberty to speak to everyone?"

"Of course; it's a free country. They won't bite you."

Young Mr. Fiske sighed, and lit a cigarette. Sometimes the country seemed to him so very free. In England, no one would have been heartless enough to call him a boy. Was he not nearly twenty, and had not his father many shekels in his purse?

They left the uneven, corduroy track, and struck into the main road leading to Four Corners. Cedar-rail snake fences zigzagged along each side of it, with here and there a patch of stately Bush, or a habitant cabin, gay with pink roses. Little brown children, clad in a single garment, sat by the roadside. Where the road dipped down to the river, the children stood



knee-deep in the brown flood, naked and unashamed as they splashed one another.

On the other side of the river, the Laurentian Hills rose up to meet the cloudless blue sky. There was a shimmer of heat over the flower-decked fields, where more little brown children gathered wild strawberries. Their lips and finger-tips were stained by the luscious fruit. Small girls in white muslins, and pigtailed tied with blue ribbons, trooped along the dusty roadside.

Despite this unwonted grandeur, they cast wistful glances at the children splashing about in the river, the clear brown water was so much cooler than the road. Besides, the heat made their clothes sticky, their shoes hurt; it was nicer to be without. Still, Speech Day came but once a quarter. They trudged on with the endurance of heroines, streaks of perspiration showing on their pretty faces, their dresses held daintily up to escape the dust from passing buggies.

As they walked, their lips moved; they tried to remember all the important dates in Canadian history, and the recitations which they had studied for weeks past. Some of them, when they drew near the red brick schoolhouse, mixed the history and the recitations up together.

Although it was a great day for the children,

## The Marble City

many of them wished it over, for there was always the awful ordeal of being asked questions by proud parents—questions about things of which they had never heard, and never wished to hear; things, too, of which the parents had never heard either until they borrowed Old Man Evans' dictionary, and looked them up for the occasion.

The schoolhouse stood a little way back from the road, in all the imposing dignity of red bricks and shining tin roof. A shed against one side of it was already filled with buggies. In the furthest corner, securely hidden by the gloom, L'Oncle Brabette's goat stole hay, and butted at the ponies' noses when they protested against such barefaced robbery. The leading girl in the school hospitably received thirsty guests with a tin pail of water just drawn up from the great well in the playground. From time to time she dipped out a tin pannikin of the icy fluid.

Two trustees, vainly trying to ignore their Sunday clothes, stood on the steps of the schoolhouse, looking at the landscape as if unconscious of the terror-stricken admiration which was their just due. Only Old Man Evans, clad in his ordinary attire, and smoking the corn-cob pipe of reflection, sat on the steps, now and again dropping an encouraging

word to Melinda Peabody, a bright-haired girl of eleven.

"You won't let the other trustees ask me silly questions, will you, Old Man?" she implored. "If you do, I'll never love you again. Never! leastways, not till I'm ever so old."

Old Man refilled his pipe.

"T'other trustees knows better," he said reassuringly. "It's that little blatherskite of an Englishman as 'ill git showin' off. He's built that way, and wants alt'ring. If he does worry you, me and Ikey 'ill have to exposterlate with him."

"'Ex' what, Old Man? Where did you find such a long word? It frightens me."

"E-x ex, p-o-s-t post, e-r er, l-a-t-e late — exposterlate. Got it outer the diction'ry, Melindy; got it outer the diction'ry. Sorter tumbled on to it permiskus, and grabbed it tight. I'm allers a word or two ahead of them other trustees that way," said Old Man, with manifest pride. "Time they finds out what 'logarithms' or 'quintessential' means, I've worried the life out of 'em with 'Mesopotamia.' When they've tumbled to 'Mesopotamia,' I've got on to 'Helicarnassian' or 'pterodactyl.' Old Deacon Dunn tried to steal my diction'ry, but the mule grabbed him by the slack of his pants, and then

I exposterlated with him for bein' such a low-down, trifling cuss, and him a deacon too. Exposterlated! That's what I did. Didn't waste no time argeyfyin' with him, but just exposterlated."

Leaving the effect of this awful word to sink deep into Melinda's receptive mind, Old Man got up, thrust his pipe into his boot, and followed the other trustees to the schoolroom, where Miss Drex was already putting some of her most promising pupils through "the exercises."



## CHAPTER II

### COMPLICATIONS

IT was stiflingly hot as the children marched conscientiously about, winding up with a broom drill, in which the girls, to the accompaniment of a very tinkly piano, routed the boys with great slaughter, and looked even warmer than their red aprons and caps. Proud mothers gazed at them critically, each conscious that her own child was the pivot on which the whole school revolved.

When the manœuvres were over, Deacon Dunn, wiping his straggling grey locks with a red handkerchief, sidled up to Miss Drex like a lame turkey.

"Me and Mrs. Dunn was allowin'," he whispered significantly, "to see S'lina come out first."

Selina Dunn was the stupidest girl in the school, but pretty. Angela's lip curled. The hint was tantamount to persecution.

"She might, if she isn't last," she said crisply. "Please don't worry me, Mr. Dunn. I'm busy."

## The Marble City

A second trustee, Seth Shillaber, soon caught Angela in another corner.

"If Annie Shillaber ain't top, thar'll be trubble for you with Mrs. Shillaber," he declared grimly. "Don't you pay no 'tention to the Deacon. S'lina Dunn don't know enuff to come in when it rains."

"Annie's much more likely to come out 'bottom than top," said Angela, with spirit. "Am I to understand—"

"You needn't understand nothin'," said Mr. Shillaber, still laboriously mopping his sunburned visage. "You needn't understand nothin'. But"—he paused significantly—"Mrs. Shillaber bein' leadin' lady in Four Corners, Annie's got to come out top; and don't you forgit it."

Angela's troubled eyes involuntarily sought Old Man's. He nodded reassuringly, and she knew that she had a friend at court. Angela was young, high-spirited. Although her people had lost all their money, she did not propose to submit to dictation—even from school trustees, who could turn her away if she offended them. She was poor, and this was her first situation as a "school-marm"; but, being a Montrealler, she flattered herself that she knew more about educational methods than the

whole of the inhabitants of Four Corners put together.

Education was, comparatively speaking, new to Four Corners; hitherto, its wilful inhabitants had "resulted and treated it with ironing." Now, just to maintain their reputation for being ahead of everything else, they intended, regardless of consequences, to "fill up the children" with more education than any other township in the Ottawa Valley.

From time to time, Angela kept an anxious eye on young Mr. Fiske, who seemed to be going on satisfactorily; for he dangled a baby upon his knee, and allowed the chuckling little thing to pull at his necktie until he was half-strangled. Reassured, Angela smiled.

Young Mr. Fiske (he was "seeing life," as he called it, in foreign climes) had been given a letter of introduction to her by some Montreal friends. Hence she took a maternal interest in his welfare, and, although he was a year older than herself, treated him as a mere boy.

The men of Four Corners, conscious of the place's high social standing and rigorous etiquette, had not yet made up their minds about such a casual visitor as young Mr. Fiske. Few of them did any work, if

they could help it; but it annoyed them to think that young Mr. Fiske did even less.

"Gorgeous inseck!" said Mrs. Shillaber, describing him at a quilting bee. "Gorgeous inseck! Toils not, neither doth he spin or run a saw mill, but wears a white shirt all the time, 'stead of Christmas. A whi-ite shirt! Why's he hang on here? He's after that stuck-up school-marm. That's what he's after."

When the spelling classes began, Selina Dunn and Annie Shillaber struggled with each other as to who should display the greater ignorance, and were speedily ruled out. The contestants gradually narrowed down until the word "lettuce" floored Winnie Case, and Melinda Peabody stood, panting and triumphant, a pretty colour in her cheeks, her hands trembling with excitement as she reached out for the coveted prize.

"Hold on!" spluttered Deacon Dunn. "This child ain't won fair."

"What do you mean, Mr. Dunn?" Angela bit her pretty lower lip. "Do you insinuate that—"

"I mean," said Deacon Dunn, coming up on the platform—"I mean, as this child's bin pampered and cockered up and taught more'n other children as is more gifted, but ain't bin took so much notice of."



"Meanin' what children?" asked Old Man, with a reassuring nod to Angela.

"Meanin' S'lina Dunn and Annie Shillaber," brazenly declared the Deacon.

"That so, Miss Drex?" asked Old Man.

"It is utterly untrue," rang out Angela's indignant voice. "Melinda is naturally bright and intelligent, quick to learn; whereas I am sorry to say that Selina Dunn and Annie Shillaber are curiously lacking in that singular power of grasping things displayed by their parents."

Old Man chuckled at this palpable but injudicious hit.

"This bein' our first public school meetin', so to speak, ain't thar no way out?" he asked gently. "Can't you think of nothin' to straighten things, Deacon? Better give 'em all prizes. Maybe you was wantin' a prize yourself? I'll spell you for a dollar a side if the boys 'ill see fair."

The Deacon shuffled; but Mrs. Dunn's eye was upon him, and he knew it. Angela got up as if to say something.

Old Man motioned her to be silent.

"I've a way out of this yer little difficulty, if so be it's agreeable to you and Shillaber, Deacon," he said gently. "You know my powers of speech?"

## The Marble City

The Deacon nodded apprehensively. But he had committed himself too deeply to withdraw.

"Well," drawled Old Man, "have them two girls back agin, and put Melindy at the end. I'll give 'em first chance of spellin' a new word I was kinder savin' up for next meetin' of trustees. Hands up, boys, if you all agrees."

"Gosh, it's gittin' lively! Most as good as a row at L'Oncle Brabette's," whispered Ikey to the gaoler of Four Corners, and up went his hand.

He knew that Old Man generally carried his point.

Selina, red-headed and rubicund, came first, then slim little Annie Shillaber, with a crafty twinkle in her small black eyes. Melinda, unconcerned, indignant, but confident, waited for the word.

"Spell 'exposterlate,'" said Old Man quietly.

Selina Dunn fled with a howl of terror, and clung to her mother.

"Sounds wuss'n swearin'," Ikey declared. "Might as well ask her to spell 'Ananias.' Old Man did orter be ashamed of himself."

"Spell 'exposterlate,'" continued Old Man, to Annie.

"Teacher's not taught it to me;" and Annie followed her friend.

"Spell 'exposterlate,'" said Old Man to Melinda.

"E-x ex, p-o-s-t post, e-r er, l-a-t-e late — exposterlate," said Melinda, amid roof-shaking applause. She stretched out her hand for the prize, then drew it back again. "'Taint mine. I heard Old Man say it outside," she declared, with tears in her eyes.

A murmur went round the room. Angela could have hugged Melinda and Old Man also. With the impassive countenance of an Indian, Old Man looked at his fellow-trustees. He admired Melinda's candour, but felt that she had put him in a hole.

"In course," he said genially. "Think of her hearin' that, and then knowin' how to spell it! Thar ain't another child in Four Corners as could do it. Give her the prize."

"I dunno. She ain't earned no prize," obstinately declared the Deacon.

"P'raps you reckon to give 'em a better word," sarcastically remarked Old Man, with unabated calm. "Another word—like that. It's a good, powerful kind of word, though I says it."

The Deacon was cornered in his turn. Then his cunning little eyes brightened.

"Anybody can spell. Thar's this high-toned little Englishman. Let him ask 'em a hist'ry question

way back. Old Man don't know him, and he don't know Old Man, so there can't be no contrition atween 'em."

He went over to young Mr. Fiske, who, from the open door, was following the flight of a loon across the river, and longing to be out upon the sparkling flood.

The Deacon, gripping young Mr. Fiske by the arm, led him up to the platform.

"Ask 'em a hist'ry question—a real hard 'un," he said hoarsely. "Sorter question none of 'em can't answer."

The amiable young Mr. Fiske, thus abruptly brought before the public, lost his head. He did not in the least understand the situation ; but seeing three little girls before him, with Old Man standing just behind Melinda, feebly proceeded to rake his memory for something historical, something connected with the remote past.

Presently a fatal inspiration came to him.

"Little girl," he said nervously to the tear-stained Selina, "can you tell me the date of the first Punic War ?"

With another howl, Selina again fled to her mother's sheltering bosom.

The dismayed Mr. Fiske repeated the question



to Annie Shillaber. Annie quickly followed Selina.

"I'm—I'm afraid it isn't fair," he feebly protested. "I didn't mean to be so hard on them."

"Go on," said Old Man ; and his tone sent a thrill of apprehension down young Mr. Fiske's spine.

"Little girl," repeated young Mr. Fiske, for the third time of asking — "little girl, can you tell me the date of the first Punic War?"

Melinda's right hand shot out affirmatively.

"Ten sixty-six," she replied, without a moment's hesitation.

In the midst of the frantic applause, young Mr. Fiske was about to declare Melinda wrong, but caught Old Man's eyes, which had narrowed to angry slits.

"What's the matter with ten sixty-six? All right, ain't it?" slowly asked Old Man.

"Ye-es," gasped Mr. Fiske, feeling that by some occult process Old Man drew out his soul by the roots, and made him say the exact opposite of what he meant.

"Certain sure?" queried Old Man.

"Certain sure," declared young Mr. Fiske.

"Thar ain't no mistake?"

"No; of course not. There's no mistake."

"Liar!" murmured the disappointed Deacon.

Old Man smiled genially.

"Then the exercises is over," he said, handing the prize to Melinda. "Afore we goes, I juss wants to say a few words of thanks for Miss Drex's kindness in livin' among us, workin' among us, and reformin' even L'Oncle Brabette's goat when she passes by, so to speak. Since she's come to Four Corners, we've a right to put on frills, and—and"—he concluded with a poetical outburst—"to—to live up to her."

Angela's lovely eyes made Old Man her slave for ever. Her handkerchief rose to her lips, she went off into shrieks of hysterical laughter. The combined tension of the afternoon and the heat of the stuffy schoolroom were too much for her.

Young Mr. Fiske dashed to her side, and carried her into the open air. Fortunately, the tin dipper was handy. He splashed water over Angela, and supported her tottering steps to the back of the schoolhouse. There was a seat beneath a spreading green maple. Half-leading, half-carrying Angela, he placed her on the seat, and frantically implored her to stop laughing.

Old Man followed them. When Angela recovered she took his brown hand in hers and kissed it.

"You—you saved the situation," she said, with another gasp of laughter. "I've been overworking

to get the children up to concert pitch, or I shouldn't have made such an exhibition of myself."

"Don't you git strung up, missy," said Old Man, surveying his hand in dazed wonderment. "Don't you git strung up. You ain't goin' to lose the situation, you bet. I'll take care of that. You did orter know better 'n to go spoilin' a gown like this," he continued, turning severely to young Mr. Fiske.

"You've made me seem a silly fool, and a liar to boot," said young Mr. Fiske fiercely. "Good afternoon, Miss Drex!" and he rushed off to hide his anger.

Old Man looked after him.

"Guess I'll have to be a parent to him," he said quietly. "I made him lie right enuff. I makes most people do things when I wants 'em to. He couldn't help himself."

"Why," asked Miss Drex, as she rose from the seat and took Old Man's arm—"why did you do it?"

"I've had my eye on them trustees for some whiles," said Old Man, in matter-of-fact tones. "I knew I'd have to exposterlate with 'em publicly some day. 'Sides, it's 'stonishin' the good you can do with a big, healthy lie, when folk ain't expectin' it.

I'll go and explain things to that little Englishman to-night. I like what there is of him."

"He need not have been so offensive to you," declared Miss Drex. "I'm very much annoyed with him. Old Man, you're a *preux chevalier*."

"I'll sling that at Ikey next time he makes an idgeot of himself," said Old Man hastily. "I did orter ha' known Melinda 'd be too straight for me. She gave the show away. What part of the States did they have them Puny Wars?"

Angela somewhat abruptly asked for another glass of water.



## CHAPTER III

### DISASTER

LATER that afternoon, young Mr. Fiske, in all the airy deshabelle of his carefully disarranged costume, sat on the Post Office counter holding a letter addressed to himself. The writing was crabbed, uneven, and smeared, as if it had been hurriedly blotted, more from force of habit than from any other reason.

To give himself time to cool down after quitting the school premises, young Mr. Fiske had spent an agreeable half-hour with the Postmistress, who asked him if he knew a London man named William Smith, a cousin of hers, in "the old country."

When young Mr. Fiske condescendingly pointed out to her that London was full of Smiths, mostly called "William," she agreed with him that the probabilities of his meeting this particular William Smith were not great. Still, one never knew what might happen; unexpected things generally came

so quickly; and if by any chance Mr. Fiske did meet William, he was to tell him all about Four Corners, and how easy it was to grow wheat "way back." Whereupon Mr. Fiske promised to deliver her message if he had the opportunity, and promptly forgot all about it.

At this hour the Post Office was generally filled with loungers waiting for the mail. Although most of them did not expect letters, they resorted to the Post Office because it formed an agreeable loafing-ground for the discussion of local politics. Gentlemen and ladies who were not on speaking terms elsewhere waived their differences, personal and political, at the Post Office, only to be frostily unconscious of one another's existence outside it.

The letters from Ottawa and Montreal were brought across the river in a little ferry boat. About an hour before there was any possibility of their being sorted, everyone in Four Corners, with the exception of Chi Sing, the parchment-hued Chinaman at the *Gazette* office (he was supposed to be a disgraced mandarin, whose pigtail had been sterilised after the most complete and gruesome methods because he had conspired against the life of the Emperor), came down to the Postmistress to hear the latest news. They thus passed a pleasant hour

or two, and saw whether their neighbours received any letters.

The glass backs of the little pigeon-holes in which the letters were put faced the loungers, the more adventurous spirits among whom generally got up a pool of twenty-five cents each, the man with the most letters "rakin' in the pile."

On this particular afternoon, however, people still lingered at the schoolhouse. Consequently, Mr. Fiske and the Postmistress were alone, with the exception of the latter's grey cat, which lay fast asleep on a little table by the window.

Young Mr. Fiske, in the congenial society of the Postmistress, a gentle, dreamy woman, who was suspected of writing poetical tributes to the memory of departed friends—tributes which effectually prevented them from ever wishing to return to Four Corners—forgot his anger against Old Man, and even went so far as to promise to come back to Four Corners when he had finished his travels, little dreaming that the letter in his hand contained serious tidings.

Even after Chi Sing—being a Chinaman, he never loafed—punctual to the minute, had drifted up and noiselessly slithered away with the *Gazette* mail, Mr. Fiske still lingered in the cool little Post

Office, admiring the dainty muslin curtains and window ledges filled with fragrant flowers.

There was a comfortable look about the place, which made young Mr. Fiske homesick, and he confided to the Postmistress that his father probably missed their customary game of billiards very much.

"Aren't there any more of you, then?" asked the Postmistress, opening her sweet blue eyes with sympathetic curiosity.

"Not a soul," declared young Mr. Fiske, as he sat on the counter, and ruefully surveyed his disordered costume. "Dad's all I have in the world. Why, we'd never been parted until three months ago, when he suddenly started me off to Canada."

"What for?" not unnaturally asked the Postmistress. "To learn to work?"

"No. To improve my mind," airily declared young Mr. Fiske. "Dad said something about 'Homekeeping youths have ever homely wits,' and that I'd better run round for a bit, and size myself up. He was looking so ill that I didn't like to leave him; but he insisted; and when dad insists, I have to give way. I said I'd go if he'd come down to Liverpool to see me off. That's ages ago."

"And you miss him?"

"Miss him!" The young fellow's glance spoke



volumes. "Somehow, I can't speak about him to other people, but you're so kind, I feel as if I'd known you for a long time."

The middle-aged Postmistress flushed a little at this unexpected tribute.

"I like you," she said gently ; "but I don't like to see you wasting your time. Can't you do anything useful? In Canada, we all do something useful—some, of course, more than others," she added hastily, with a vivid recollection of certain loafers who never worked in any circumstances.

"Useful!" The boy was astonished. "Of course, I shall have to do something useful when I get back. But I hate City life—the being tied down to a desk. I tell dad he ought to go away from his stockbroking and have a run round. If he were only here, it would do him heaps of good—the rivers, the mountains, the lovely kindness of the people. I wish they'd like me better ; but I'm shy. Miss Drex says they think I'm stuck-up, and she has to reform me and make me less objectionable. It isn't really stuck-uppishness, you know," he added eagerly ; "it's only our English way. We're not so—so hearty to—to strangers."

The Postmistress regarded young Mr. Fiske with renewed kindliness. His handsome, round, boyish face looked singularly youthful. The blue eyes

were innocent of guile, his curly hair was so thick and brightly golden, his brow so unfurrowed by worldly cares, that she sighed to think of the time when the down upon his upper lip would be tinged with grey, the fresh complexion lined and wrinkled.

To the Postmistress, in her placid, uneventful, middle-aged days, there was a beauty, a fascination about youth which filled her with gentle melancholy. She seemed to see this frank, honest, "stuck-up" lad gradually hardening, and sighed that he should one day be contaminated by worldly wisdom, learn to strive for the almighty dollar, lose his virginal purity of outlook.

"Your father's rich, isn't he?" she asked, almost abruptly.

The lad nodded carelessly.

"Pots of tin. But he worries himself to a shadow over it. That reminds me, I must write to ask for some more money. The more I spend, the better he seems to like it. His handwriting looks even shakier than usual."

"Wouldn't you like to come in and sit down and read your letter here?" asked the Postmistress, opening the little door which divided her from the general public. "It's quieter than at L'Oncle Brabette's."

"Thanks! You're awfully good, you know; but if you won't think me rude, I'll take my letter back and read it alone. It will be just like dad speaking to me. When I've been making a giddy goat of myself, I like to see him lean back with a sort of tired smile, as much as to say: 'Thus does history repeat itself. Jim, it will take time to endue you with the wisdom of the serpent.' Come to think of it, I never did care much for snakes," he added, with ingenuous candour. "They'd a soft time of it in the Garden of Eden, and if they'd been wise they'd have stopped there. Nobody tried to smash them before the Fall."

Something moved the gentle Postmistress to pity this lad, who thus unconsciously quaffed the cup of happiness with such eager relish.

"As long as you stay here, come in when you want to be quiet and write to your father. I suppose you'll be going on to Ottawa soon? How was it you came to Four Corners?"

"It's awfully good of you," repeated young Mr. Fiske. "You see, there was a chap I met in Montreal who said that if I wanted the nonsense knocked out of me, the one person in Canada to do it was Old Man Evans. So this chap gave me a letter of introduction to Miss Drex, who'd come

here to teach school since her people smashed up. He said she was awfully proud, but had a heap of 'horse sense.' And then I go and 'get mad,' as you say here, with Old Man, instead of backing him up, when he tried to take the shine out of those other trustees. Oh, I am a goat!" he added despairingly. "I've been here nearly a month, and my money's all gone. But the dad won't mind," he added cheerily. "He likes to see me make it fly."

The Postmistress was horrified.

"Ah," she said, "if you had to earn every dollar you spend, it would be much better for you!"

The lad laughed jollily.

"I daresay it would; but you can't put old heads on young shoulders. Won't you give me a sprig of your scented geranium? Thank you! I'll put it in dad's letter. He's fond of flowers, you know. Scented geranium was my poor mother's favourite flower."

He slit open the letter, slipped in the piece of fragrant geranium which the Postmistress gave him, and held out his hand.

"Now, I'll be off to my supper, if Celimé's saved any berries for me, and then have a good long chat with dad. I forgot, though. You don't shake hands in Canada as much as we do."



The Postmistress extended her long, slim fingers and shook hands heartily. Then as young Mr. Fiske (he had quite forgotten his anger against Old Man) bounded jauntily down the steps, she sighed.

"I don't like to see people so happy," she murmured, taking up her sewing. "It always means trouble afterwards. And there was an owl hooting in the rock elms last night."

But young Mr. Fiske continued his joyous way to L'Oncle Brabette's, fully determined to be demonstrative to everyone he met, and leave a good impression behind him. To-morrow he would see Miss Drex and apologise to her, though she had pitched him out of the buggy for "putting on side."

What a jolly thing it was to be alive, with a father to give him everything he wanted—the dearest dad in the world; this beautiful place to stay in, with its queer, kindly, original people, whose standards were so different from his own; pretty, smiling Celimé, L'Oncle Brabette's orphan niece, to chat with on the veranda in her curious broken English, which sounded so charmingly as her sparkling black eyes looked up to him with adoring reverence. Once or twice he had almost told her what he thought of

Miss Drex's stately beauty, but something had always held him back.

Dearly as young Mr. Fiske loved England, he could not conceive anything more beautiful than this deeply-glowing sunset, its fiery flakes of colour softened down on the horizon to soft, smoky greys, with here and there an unfading patch of blue. Quaint griffins, dragons, and absurdly-humped camels stood on the shores of aerial lakes, to which a lop-sided eagle descended on one imperfect pinion.

There was a sweet breeze blowing over the slumbering river as it lapped the feet of the opposite mountains. And the mountains, lacking sunlight on their lower ledges, looked terribly grim, sombre, melancholy, the dark masses of their clustering cedars showing almost black against the sky-line.

From behind L'Oncle Brabette's came the "Pi-et, pi-et—peet, peet" of the little frogs, with occasional thunderous bellows from the monarch of the marsh, the speckle-bellied bull-frog, whose mates answered him back from afar with the soft lowing of distant herds.

The darkness came so quickly that it was impossible to see who sat upon L'Oncle Brabette's

maple - shaded veranda. He heard a confused murmur of voices as he went into the supper-room, and black-eyed Celimé flew to do his bidding, all eager smiles and coquettish cherry-coloured ribbons.

"W'at for you so late?" inquired Celimé. "I have mak' to fight hard for de berries and cream, M'sieu Jeem. Dose oders dere, dey gobble, gobble, gobble all de tam."

She flitted round him, full of innocent worship, as she gazed with eager solicitude into his blue eyes.

Why was everyone so kind? True to her word, Celimé had saved the best of the wild strawberries, and waited upon him with an eagerness which he felt was wholly undeserved.

When he had made a hearty meal, she fetched him cigarettes, lit one for him, put it to her own pretty lips, then handed it to him in mock disgust as the lad, his father's letter calling to him from the depths of his pocket, went upstairs, pulled a rocker to the dressing-table, so that he could see the shrewd, whimsical old face in its gorgeous frame, and drew out the letter with eager fingers.

"My, but I'm homesick for you, daddy," he murmured, half ashamedly. "There never was anybody in the world as good to me as you are.

Why can't you drop money-making and travel round with me!"

He got up to throw out a firefly which had drifted into the room, and sat down again, lazily rocking himself with a sense of protracted enjoyment.

"Now, dad," he said, opening the letter, "come out of that frame, and let's hear what you have to say for yourself. W-w-what! What's this!"

The letter was very short :

"DEAR LAD,—Money gone. Am an old man and a tired one, and by the time you get this I shall have gone too. All debts paid. Last hundred pounds yours. Try to make a start with it. Grow up into a clean, honourable tiller of the Canadian soil. Don't speculate. You will have a hard fight, but you will win through. God bless you, and—good-bye!—Your unhappy father,

"RICHARD FISKE."

"Good-bye!" the boy repeated mechanically. Then threw up his arms with a wild cry: "Dad! dad! Come back! come back!"

Old Man entered the room just in time to catch



him as the ill-omened letter fluttered to the floor. The lad hid his face on Old Man's shoulder.

"My father!" he sobbed. "My father's—dead! Dead!"

The lamp sputtered and went out. With rugged tenderness, Old Man held him fast.

## CHAPTER IV

### "THE VALLEY OF THE SHADDER"

FOR a week young Mr. Fiske mourned his father, shunned the sunlight, was incapable of renewing his grip on life. He neither ate nor slept, but lay with closed blinds, his face to the wall, tasting all the bitterness of death. The shock simply crushed him, destroyed his individuality. He did not know where he was, or what he did.

Why had he left his father to face that awful trouble alone, to go this journey of all days by his own hand? It would never have happened had father and son been together.

He shut his eyes, oblivious of the passing hours, unconscious whether night were day or day were night. Had there been some warning of the blow, he could have borne it better ; but there had been no warning. He saw the face which had never frowned upon him, cold in death ; and his heart was very sore. Grief blotted out all the purposes of life.

On its very threshold, he had no purposes, but was stunned mentally and physically.

When people came to condole with him, he bolted his door and refused to let them in—all save one. He wanted to be alone with his sorrow, to realise fully the love that had gone out of his life. Father and son had always been “chums,” always curiously dependent on one another. The lad felt as if he had lost part of himself by this overwhelming and unexpected blow.

Instinctively understanding this, Old Man silently took up his position at the head of L’Oncle Brabette’s stairs, and kept away curious callers, including even Parson Trail.

“Our young friend,” said the good Parson to Old Man, as he puffed up the stairs—“our young friend, chastened by the hand of affliction, is now in a receptive attitude proper to the due understanding of those solemn truths which for five-and-forty years I have somewhat vainly endeavoured to inculcate in Four Corners. I will approach him in—”

“I guess I wouldn’t,” said Old Man, not offering to move.

“Wouldn’t what?” asked the Parson, becoming commendably brief in his astonishment.

“Inculcate in this yer direction.” Old Man pointed

with his thumb to young Mr. Fiske's bedroom door. "He ain't well enuff to be inculcated."

"Pardon me, Mr. Evans, but I should not be doing my duty as a Christian minister if I were to fail to—to improve the occasion."

"I'm doin' all the necessary improvin', while Ikey's tryin' his hand at bein' sheriff till I gits round agin, and a nice mess he's makin' of it," said Old Man drily. "Leave the lad to me, Parson. Leave him to me. You've got your hands full of darned sight tougher contracts 'n him in Four Corners. Old Larivault's smashin' up his furniture, and raisin' Cain gin'rally by the Crick yonder. Go and shower the blessin's of the Gospel on him—he needs 'em—from Deuteronomy downwards. I'm haulin' this young man through the Valley of the Shadder, so to speak; and I reckon I've got to do it my own way."

"You mean well, Mr. Evans, but I fail to apprehend what right you—"

"See here, Parson," said Old Man quietly. "Ain't I bin a good friend to you, a-guidin' and a-comfortin' you in this yer wilderness of rock-heavin' sinners, when you've a'most bin ready to heave back agin instead of castin' pearls afore swine, so to speak?"



“I must confess, Mr. Evans, that on more than one occasion—on more than one occasion—I have been largely indebted to your practical wisdom in dealing with complicated problems evolved by the unregenerate state which you so graphically describe as ‘rock-heaving.’”

“That’s all right then, Parson,” said Old Man, much gratified. “I can’t ask no man for a more han’sumer tribute ’n that. Go ’way, and we’ll call it even.”

“You don’t think, then, that spiritual admonition would be of any good to the poor, grief-stricken lad?” anxiously inquired the Parson.

“Not a mossle of good,” said Old Man emphatically. “He’s got that thin, it ’ud blow him away. You leave him to me, Parson. Leave him to me. I reckon you’re the only man in Four Corners as can tackle Larivault when he’s on one of his jamborees. The sight of you ’ill make him remember where he’s bound to fetch up some day, and give him the horrors. Don’t you waste your time here, but put it in where it ’ill do most good.”

“I have always placed great reliance on your worldly wisdom, Mr. Evans,” said the good Parson, equally gratified in his turn. “And I have every confidence that you will do all you can to alleviate

and lighten the grief of our young friend in this sore affliction which—”

“Thar won’t be much of his furniture left, if you don’t make a bee-line for Larivault’s,” significantly suggested Old Man. “He’s bin on the war-path all day, and his furniture ain’t over strong.”

“Quite so! Quite so! I am much indebted to you for your suggestion. I will gird up my loins and go down unto this son of Amalek, and reason with him—reason with him. Good afternoon, Mr. Evans! Good afternoon!” And the worthy Parson bustled away.

Old Man rather anxiously watched him disappear.

“Hope Larivault won’t hurt him,” he muttered; “but I has my doubts. And his father’s name ain’t ‘Amalek’ neither. Still, Larivault knows the Parson’s a friend of mine; and when my friends git hurt, there’s trubble—for them as hurts ’em.”

He went out on the veranda and whistled.

A moment later, Ikey Marston’s red head appeared on a level with the veranda-rail.

“Juss you go and dry-nuss the Parson,” said his friend. “He’s started off to tackle Larivault. Better take a pair of handcuffs with you, by way of moral suason. That’ll do more to sober up Larivault than

all the Parson's 'And agin I would remark, my errin' brother.'"

Ikey grinned, and departed on his mission as the evening shadows began to fall.

Presently Celimé, her pretty eyes full of sympathy, appeared on the stairs, anxiously tiptoeing up to Old Man.

"Oh, M'sieu Ole Man, I have brought heem somet'ing to eat. He will die if you do not mak' heem to eat. Mon Dieu, he will die!"

"You're a good girl, Celimé—a good girl; and I'll come to your weddin' some day," said Old Man paternally. "He ain't goin' to die whiles I'm round. Juss give me a lamp. I'll go in and rouse him up a bit. Second thoughts, I don't want no lamp. 'Taint dark yet. No, you can't come with me. You'll git cryin' your pretty eyes out over him, and that's the worst thing as could happen. 'Sides, 'taint proper."

"But M'sieu Jeem he ees my fren', Ole Man, and he ees seeck."

"Can't help it, Celimé. You can't see him."

He took the tray from Celimé's reluctant hand, and frowned to see the little bunch of roses upon it.

"A good gal; but I reckon I'd better shove these yer roses into my pocket," he murmured. "They might set him off agin. That gal 'ill be

gittin' to think too much of him. Then there'll be trubble with Miss Drex."

He softly opened the door and went to the window, making as much noise as he possibly could.

The figure on the bed did not stir.

Presently the rattling of the blind, as Old Man drew it up and let it fall again, struck on young Mr. Fiske's sorrow-dulled ears.

"Who's there?" he asked fretfully. "Can't you leave me alone?"

"'Taint good for man to be alone," said Old Man, opening the window and letting in the cool, sweet air—"specially a young man. The younger he is, the more lonesome he gits sometimes."

Young Mr. Fiske turned over and put his hand to his eyes.

"Go away, Mr. Evans. Please go away!"

"Not much, sonny. Not much. And most of my friends and enemies has got inter a way of callin' me 'Old Man.' You've bin under the juniper tree long enuff with Elisha and them other prophets of Baal, so to speak, and I'm goin' to take you out for a stroll under the pines. They're most comfortin', when you rightly understands 'em."

The lad sat up, pressing his hands to his aching head.



“You’re very kind,” he said wretchedly. “You’re very kind; but can’t you understand I want to be alone? I—I’m in too much trouble to talk about it.”

Old Man poured some ice-cold water into a basin. Then he found young Mr. Fiske’s big sponge.

“Course you are! Don’t you worry. I’ll do all the talkin’. Juss strip off your shirt, sonny, and sluice yourself. Cold water washes away more trubble ’n whisky ever does.”

The poor boy was so weak from want of food that he could scarcely stand. He looked at Old Man as if dazed.

“Ah! You didn’t know him,” he murmured brokenly. “Dad! dad!” And turned his face to the wall again.

“No; I didn’t know him. Must ha’ bin a good sort of a man.” Old Man’s arm stole round the lad in a quiet, unostentatious sort of way. “Must ha’ bin a good sort of a man for you to take on so. Now, juss lean over this way. So! That’s it. You won’t know yourself when you’ve had your head in this yer basin. Sittin’ under juniper trees, so to speak, gits to be a habit, if you don’t come out from under.”

Talking gently, softly, all the time, in order to distract the boy’s attention, Old Man got him to sit

up on the bed, and put his hands in the icy water. After he had sponged his aching head, he held the cold, soft sponge on the back of the lad's neck until young Mr. Fiske shivered.

"Now, one of them towels like a board," said Old Man, "and you'll be warm agin. I can't git that partin' of yours right nohow. It's tangled up like a bar's."

The lad's hands dropped to his sides. He struggled to make an effort, though the strength had gone out of him. Night after night, day after day, he had lain in tearless agony, with his face to the wall, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, knowing nothing.

Old Man removed the basin from the little table.

"You don't mind if I has my supper with you?" he asked indifferently.

"No. You're—you're very kind."

Young Mr. Fiske felt vaguely comforted by Old Man's presence.

"That's right. Now we'll start fair," said Old Man. "You begin."

"I—I—"

Old Man cut him some meat.

"Corn cake too," he said appreciatively. "Never hankered arter corn cake? You juss try."

He buttered the golden cake, and thrust knife and fork into young Mr. Fiske's listless hands.

“Juss begin,” he said gently. “Everything must have a beginning, else me and you wouldn't be here. Then we'll talk.”

Coaxing, petting, soothing the grief-stricken lad as if he were a child, Old Man persuaded him, morsel by morsel, to eat something. When they had made an end of eating, he produced a flask from his pocket, and poured a little whisky into a tin pannikin.

“I don't advise as a gin'ral thing, mind you, for young men to look upon the wine-cup when it's red, or any other colour; but you kinder want rousin'. 'Sides, this is good old Rye whisky. Drink it off.”

Although the young man shook his head, he found the pannikin at his unwilling lips, and swallowed its contents with a cough and a splutter.

“There! there!” Old Man patted him gently. “Comin' up like a beaver dam. Kinder thought we'd git it down, somehow. The trubble with most people is they can't stop gittin' it down. You'll be able to crawl a bit now. Where's your jacket? No button on top? My, but that's bad! We'll have to git Celimé to see to it one of these days.”

He hung the jacket over young Mr. Fiske's shoulders, and put his arms through it.

"A blow on the wharf 'ill do you all the good in the world," he said. "Trubble's easier to bear when you're lookin' at God Almighty's mountains t'other side of the river. They're so much bigger 'n our little worries. Where's them paper tubes you plays at smokin' with? Feel up to one of 'em?"

Seeing that the lad shook his head, Old Man did not insist.

"Now we're all ready. Take my arm, case you're a bit cramped in the legs."

Young Mr. Fiske got up from the bed.

"Cramp! What's the matter with me? Why, I can scarcely walk," he said languidly. "I'll try to get out to-morrow. There will be people about now."

"Not a soul," said Old Man mendaciously. "Juss you hold on to me till you gits that whimbly-wambly feelin' out of your legs, and we'll go by the back way so's nobody comes anigh us."

They went slowly out the back way, then crossed the yard, and crawled down the wooden wharf which stretched its snaky length for half a mile into the bay. Here and there, the first faint evening stars shone over the opposite mountains. There was a holy



peace, a perfect calm, in the summer night, as the fireflies flitted round them and the river sucked against the wooden piers.

The lad would have fallen more than once but for Old Man's supporting arm. He had a vague idea that shadowy people passed him in the gloom, although they all looked the other way, as if they did not see him. Once he heard a girl's happy laughter; it jarred horribly. Old Man felt a shiver run through his thin frame.

When the whip-poor-wills began to call to each other through the fragrant night, the tears fell slowly down the lad's cheeks, for the wild yearning and pain of their vibrant voices filled him with fresh grief. But cool breezes fanned him, the moon rose slowly from behind the mountains, lighting up the placid surface of the river.

In the distance, the rapids roared and tumbled and foamed, as if fighting some resistless force which thrust them ever onward. “Way up” on the Point gleamed the light of an Indian's camp-fire. A dusky, blanket-wrapped figure stood motionless at the water's edge, gazing towards Four Corners.

Presently the little ferry boat fussed up to the wharf, the passengers from the saw mills disembarked; there was a babble of happy voices.

Old Daoust, rocking about in his boat on the river, began softly to play his ancient fiddle. Mellowed and sweetened by distance, the music stole softly into the lad's sorrow-stricken heart, his head fell back on Old Man's breast, and he slept.

Old Man sat there listening to the plashing of the water, the mournful cries of the loons, as the tin roofs sparkled in the moonlight and the little white houses huddled together beneath the spreading maples. Human life seemed to him the affair of a mere passing moment, when contrasted with the marvellous earth—that earth from which all things sprang, to which all things returned.

After everyone had left the wharf, he picked up the sleeping lad, and carried him back to L'Oncle Brabette's. He smiled grimly as he threw a rug over young Mr. Fiske, and noticed a faint tinge of colour in his thin cheek.

"That's right, sonny—that's right," he murmured appreciatively. "Reckon we're beginnin' to fetch a compass round the Valley of the Shadder. But when you've fetched a compass round it, there's Celimé waitin' for you on one side and Miss Drex on the other. If you're goin' to stay here, there'll be a fight for you; and I don't know where else you can go. 'Taint my fun'ral, anyway. The school-marm's

cold and proud, and the little Frenchy's all fire and feelin'. I reckon you'll just have to hoe your own row atween 'em.”

The lad turned restlessly, then fell asleep again. Seeing that he would sleep for hours, Old Man stole noiselessly away into the night to attend to those important affairs pertaining to the shrievalty which called for immediate action.

## CHAPTER V

### SETTLING DOWN

A MONTH later, young Mr. Fiske sought out Old Man in his subterranean den beneath the Court-house. Old Man, alone for once (his faithful henchman, Ikey, was away in search of a gentleman who, feeling time hang heavy on his hands, had been amusing himself by firing his neighbour's barn), nodded cordially to young Mr. Fiske, and went on with the manufacture of a kind of cuneiform inscription which he called "writin'."

Seeing how laboriously he squeezed the pen in his huge hand, young Mr. Fiske somewhat diffidently took it away, motioned Old Man to fill his pipe, and began to copy out the document which had caused the sheriff so much trouble.

Old Man lit his pipe and watched the lad with envy.

"Didn't make no fuss nor nothin'," he told Ikey afterwards; "but juss waded in, and copied them



papers same as if he'd bin used to 'em all his life. When I give him the diction'ry to help him, he juss asked what for, and didn't take no notice."

As soon as young Mr. Fiske finished copying one document, he began on the pile which had accumulated during Old Man's absence from office. For more than an hour his pen flew over the paper, until Old Man began to feel anxious.

"Don't you overdo it, sonny," he said paternally. "Guess you've done more'n a dollar's wuth—"

"Done what?"

The young fellow indignantly pushed back his chair, and looked round the barren little office, with its stone floor, rusty old iron stove, and gorgeous almanacs upon the thick walls—walls through which many a prisoner in the adjacent gaol had vainly tried to burrow. Two rough desks, and a couple of much-bewhittled chairs, comprised the remainder of the furniture.

A tattered old bearskin, with a bullet-hole through it, and a pair of tin sconces, served as a foil to the floridity of the almanacs, whilst three or four different-sized pairs of handcuffs depended from a huge rusty nail, and betokened Old Man's delicate desire to study the comfort of refractory prisoners whom it was his duty to bring down to gaol.

Old Man's hand dropped to his side.

"I only thought," he began shamefacedly, "it's time for you to begin makin' a livin'. Your board bill's runnin' up at Brabette's, and—"

The lad shyly looked down at the papers before him. He wanted to thank Old Man for helping him to bear his sorrow, but did not know how.

"I've—I've been making a goat of myself, and you've been very kind to me," he said, trying to speak calmly. "If it hadn't been for you, I'd have gone crazy. What made you take so much trouble with me?"

"Trubble!" Old Man was surprised. "Oh, Miss Drex allowed you'd want a bit of lookin' after, so I—"

The young fellow's face fell.

"It was kind of her," he said; "but I was hoping, Old Man, you did it because—"

"So I did, sonny; so I did!" heartily returned Old Man. "I've sorter took to you; so's Ikey. So's Old Man Junyer, so to speak, when you fished him out of the Crick."

Young Mr. Fiske was surprised in his turn.

"What! That little chap who tumbled in the day after I got here?"

"Yes," said Old Man drily. "Him bein' of a curious turn of mind, he's bound to git to the bottom of things. If it hadn't been for you, he'd never ha' come to the top agin."

"I'm glad," said young Mr. Fiske. "Just let me finish these papers. I want to ask your advice. I'm leaving L'Oncle Brabette's to-day, though both he and Celimé won't hear of it."

He wrote busily for another hour, then put down his pen, and turned to Old Man.

"What sort of farmer d'you think I'd make?" he asked suddenly.

"Oh, that's it! I thought your clothes had give out," said Old Man. "Where did you rake up them duds? Sorter give me the notion you'd took to placer minin' or found a scarecrow."

Young Mr. Fiske blushed. On his first arrival at Four Corners, he had worn brown, shiny boots, a light grey suit of exquisite cut, and immaculate white collars to match his equally white hands. Now, he was attired in a rough, blue flannel shirt, coarse, heavy "pants," the ends of which were tucked into the tops of thick, high boots, and a hat which was popularly known in Four Corners as a "cow-breakfast," from the fact that when fodder ran short in winter, a hungry cow was supposed to have

strolled into a store and eaten one which was hanging up there.

The shirt, however, did not fit, and showed a couple of inches of ridiculously white throat. Old Man noticed it approvingly. It showed that the lad was beginning to rouse himself, and once more take an interest in mundane affairs. If only his appetite would come back!

Mr. Fiske's slim form seemed slimmer than ever in the loose folds of the shirt. Old Man, running his eye over it, saw that, given normal conditions, young Mr. Fiske promised to develop into a very strong man.

"You see, Old Man," the boy said hastily, "I've been thinking out things. I could perhaps get a place in a bank at Montreal or Ottawa; but I hate banks. It's far better to live an open-air life, hard as it would feel at first, and stay here. I'd be among friends here—you and the Postmistress, and Miss Drex and Ikey and Celimé."

"That why you bought old Toussaint Leduc's little farm by the saw mill?"

"What do you know about it?" Young Mr. Fiske was astonished.

"Wanted two hundred and fifty dollars for it, didn't he?"



"Yes."

"Here's fifty back. Two hundred's plenty. So I told him when we had a little argeyment on the subject. You'll want the rest of your money for stockin' the farm. If I was you, I wouldn't buy an old cow as started givin' milk afore you was born, and run dry last year. Why, that darned old cow's like Larivault. It's bin gittin' dryer ever since I can remember."

The young man smiled.

"She did look a bit ancient ; but I was lonely, and took a fancy to her."

"If you ain't careful, that sort of lonesomeness 'ill lead to fancy farmin'," suggested Old Man ; "and fancy farmin' leads to destruction and fancy drinks when things gits sort of mixed up ; and then, in the midst of life we are in death, as Moses said to them blamed Israelites tryin' to drown themselves in the Red Sea 'cause they didn't like manna. I s'pose you got that old plug of a three-legged horse from Toussaint for the same reason as you bought the cow ? That cow's one of the landmarks of Four Corners. You don't want to git into trubble over a cow ?"

"Get into trouble ! I don't understand."

"Cursed is he that buyeth his neighbour's land-

mark, no matter what he gives for it," said Old Man. "Ain't that gittin' into trubble? Horse kicked you yet?"

"He didn't know me at first, and I incautiously tried to make friends with him."

"Where did he git you? He's a terror, that hoss. He'll kick the stuffin' out of you, if you ain't careful. I'll juss set my mule to whang his ribs a bit, till he cools down. I've changed the cow for you, so's you shan't disobey the Scripturs. When you git down to Toussaint's, you'll find a cow as understands the whole duty of cows is to give milk, not to fool round eatin' sawdust. Ever try to milk a cow?"

"N-no. It seems simple enough—"

"Guessed as much," said Old Man pityingly. "If you're feelin' that kick still, we'll git some plaster for you at Cross's store afore we goes down. Then I'll show you how to milk and feed the cow. 'Sides, I'll give you five dollars a week to fix my writin' for me. What you lose on the farm, you can save up here."

"You—you're not doing this out of charity?"

Young Mr. Fiske had all the fierce independence of youth.

"Not much, sonny, not much. How can I go cavortin' round arter evil-doers if I've to stop here

and copy out all them papers!" Old Man pointed with the stem of his corn-cob to a bundle of official returns. "Got any things?"

"Things!"

"Yes—things."

"I—I hadn't thought about—things. I'll scratch a few together before I go down this afternoon. Celimé wanted to give me a houseful—she's so kind."

Old Man was about to say something, but checked himself hastily.

"Of course I couldn't take them," young Mr. Fiske explained. "And L'Oncle Brabette gave me a pipe. He's a good old fellow, so I couldn't hurt his feelings by refusing it. Then Celimé began to cry, and said that I liked him better than I did her."

Old Man nodded carelessly.

"Juss so; juss so. Better leave it to me. You polish off them papers, and I'll come round here at four o'clock with a mule load. If Billy Peters looks in with blood in his eye, you might mention, sorter keerless, as I've gone home to clean up my gun." And Old Man turned away.

True to his word, when four o'clock came, Old Man reappeared at the Court-house door, bringing an outfit which would have filled an Indian squaw

with envy. As he sat in his comfortable old saddle, the mule was almost invisible. From time to time she thrust her long neck out of the superincumbent pile, and shook herself until the pots and frying-pan rattled. Then her nose dropped to the ground, and she apparently went to sleep, although, in reality, she was closely scrutinising young Mr. Fiske. Suddenly her nose came up from the ground, and thrust itself inquiringly into the pocket of the rough jacket which he had put on over his shirt.

"Shall I get her an apple?" asked young Mr. Fiske anxiously, for he had heard of the mule. "'I would be friends with her and win her love.'"

"Apple! Whaffor? She ain't great on apples, unless it's apple whisky. Give her some of this." Old Man tossed his whisky-flask to the lad. "She likes bein' treated; but she's a lady, and won't drink with everybody."

Young Mr. Fiske poured some whisky into the hollow of his hand, and the mule, extending a long pink tongue, daintily lapped it up. Then she resumed her investigations, and ended them by licking Mr. Fiske affectionately on the nose.

"She's took a fancy to you," said Old Man delightedly. "Treat her as a lady, and you're all right. She won't never go back on you. Hurt her



feelin's, and she'll kick the stuffin' out of you afore you know where you are. Put your foot on my boot whiles I hauls you up in front of me."

"But it isn't fair to the mule. She's stacked all over with things."

"That's her contract. You git up," said Old Man peremptorily; and young Mr. Fiske got up. "If she didn't want to carry you, she'd have the hull outfit in the middle of the road less'n two seconds. That's her ladylike way when she ain't happy. Juss reach over and give her a chaw."

By this time, the editor of the *Four Corners Gazette* was out on his veranda ostentatiously taking notes for next week's issue. ("Old Man going down into Egypt" was the heading of the subsequent article, in which he described the sight of Old Man vainly endeavouring to climb heavenwards. "The Editor going up a Loft" was the subsequent article, in which Old Man described his forcible interview with the humorous scribe.)

Unaware of this fact, young Mr. Fiske took the "chaw" of tobacco handed him by Old Man, and the mule, in her turn, reaching round her long neck, accepted it with ladylike condescension, then suddenly started off at a swinging trot which nearly shook young Mr. Fiske's teeth out of his head, and

set the frying-pan thumping with monotonous regularity against her wiry flank.

"Allers shows off a-leavin' town," said Old Man, in gratified accents. "She knows Perkins of the *Gazette's* been sayin' she's past work. Arter Lajeunesse's, she'll leave off puttin' on frills, and slow down."

When the mule had passed Lajeunesse's, she slowed down to a more reasonable pace, as they went onward between rows of graceful rock elms which overhung the road.

Nearly a mile below Four Corners, the mule made a turn towards the river, and plunged into the heart of the Bush. The sudden change from the heat and glare of the road to these cool, sequestered forest shades almost blinded young Mr. Fiske; but he was immediately recalled to realities by the necessity for bending beneath the overhanging branches which nearly swept him to the ground. By the time he had become accustomed to the grateful shade of the huge cedars, the mule moved at right angles to her previous course, and, leaving the trees behind them, they came in sight of the river.

A rather forlorn, battered-looking hut faced the river, with a couple of fields running down from it to the water's edge.

"Does look a bit like Noah's Ark, don't it?" suggested Old Man, lightly dropping young Mr. Fiske to the ground, "'cept the animals can't go in two by two. No mate to that old grey hoss was ever foaled, or ever will be."

Young Mr. Fiske, with an appreciative eye on his "property," agreed with Old Man. The one-storeyed hut stood upon a little eminence, its grey-shingled, weather-beaten roof and clap-boarded sides silhouetted against the sombre green of the cedars.

There was a small barn to the right, which was so like the hut that, had it not lacked windows, it might easily have been mistaken for it. To the left stood a primitive hen-house, against which a wicked-looking, wall-eyed grey horse drearily rubbed himself. The most homely sight about the place was a fine young red-and-white cow, which placidly thrust her head out of the barn, a long wisp of newly-cured hay depending from her mouth.

"I—I swept it out this morning," said young Mr. Fiske, unlocking the door. "Aren't those sunflowers jolly?"

He pointed with pardonable pride to the sunflowers, which nearly blocked out the light from the window.

"Whaffor? Can't eat 'em." Old Man looked

round the little garden in a vain search for vegetables. "Know how to chop wood?"

"I—I think so."

Old Man leisurely unloaded the mule, and brought the things into the hut.

"Kitchen and bedroom," he said appreciatively. "That's puttin' on style. Mrs. Evans has sent you down a pair of blankets."

He laid a pair of bright Mackinaw blankets on the wooden bench which did duty for a bedstead.

"Now, with your coat for a pillow, you'll be all right. If you wants to wash, you can juss roll in the river. Sand's better'n soap. More real, so to speak, and don't cost nothin'. Celimé give you that tea-caddy?"

"Yes. She's the kindest-hearted girl in the world. I didn't like to refuse after accepting L'Oncle Brabette's pipe."

"Course not," said Old Man, with a worried look.

"What's that?" asked young Mr. Fiske suddenly.

"That" was a succession of thuds, apparently against some yielding substance. The noise was followed by a wild, unearthly squeal.

"What is it?" asked young Mr. Fiske, clutching Old Man's arm. "I've never heard anything like it before."



"Guess it's the mule."

"The—mule!"

"Yes — makin' friends with your hoss. She's gittin' through the prelimineries, so to speak; juss hintin' things, in case he dunno how to treat a lady."

"She seems to be getting through him," observed Mr. Fiske, as he again listened to the thud—thud—thud; but as Old Man appeared to be satisfied, he made no further objection, and followed him to the barn to take his first lesson in milking.

Although young Mr. Fiske's fingers ached, he came back with a full pail.

"I've told them saw-mill hands you'll sell 'em what milk you don't want," said Old Man, proceeding to unpack groceries. "They'll send one of them little habitant girls up every mornin' for it."

"But I can't—sell—milk."

"Why not? Guess it's about the only crop you can sell round here. There's hay in the barn, and—"

"Toussaint's going to take it away to-morrow."

"Not much," said Old Man. "Not much. I've allowed him to make ten dollars out of you, and that's enuff. Four Corners 'ud be ashamed. 'He was a stranger, and I took him in,'" he added explanatorily, "but the Bible don't mean it 'zactly that way."

"Thank you."

"We've got to make the most of that five hundred dollars of yourn."

"There's my bill at L'Oncle's."

"Three dollars," said Old Man. "You didn't eat more'n a chicken. I told L'Oncle I'd put him in the road-gang if he didn't take three dollars, and he juss up and said he'd only do it to save your pride, as you was more like a son to him than a stranger. He's real fond of you, is L'Oncle. That minds me. Down at the Judge's, they're goin' to send up some hens for you. Kind of comp'ny. There's a lot of comp'ny in hens, if you studies their intellocks, so to speak, and talks to 'em a bit. They put more heart into their work."

From time to time Old Man cut short the lad's confused thanks, and bustled about driving nails into the walls. When he had finished making the place habitable, he detached his mule from the grey horse, who was apparently much relieved, and rode away with a cheery shout of encouragement.

"Guess he'll do first-class when he gits used to it," mused Old Man. "Trubble ain't trubble so much when you've got folks to share it with you. Bein' all alone with trubble, so to speak—that's where the

trouble is. Now, if Celimé 'ill only let him alone he's a fust-rate start."

Thus abandoned to his own devices, young Mr. Fiske got his supper ready as he best could, and lit the lamp which Old Man had thoughtfully provided. Alert, busy, cheerful, he laid the rough cloth, filled his tin pannikin, and sat down on an old three-legged milking-stool with a certain sense of proprietorship. But as he sat there, the room grew smaller in the dusk, the corners filled with shadows. Rising from the shadows, he saw the wistful eyes of the man he believed to be dead. Somehow, the wistful look faded away, their expression changed to a quizzical one.

"Ah, dad! if you were only here to begin again, I'd work the skin off my fingers for you," the young man groaned as he pushed aside his untasted meal, and sat down on the rude doorstep.

He seemed to feel his father's caressing hand upon his shoulder, to hear a voice say: "I'm coming, lad, I'm coming;" and derived a vague comfort from this imaginary and immaterial response to his grief-stricken heart. Suddenly it occurred to him that he was wholly alone, left entirely to his own devices. Surely he had no time to lose in grieving over the past! The present called to him with insistent

voice. In this great, free, beautiful land, he must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. There was no room for idlers. He had to become a man, for ever put away childish things.

The old grey horse shuffled morosely round the corner, and halted within a yard of young Mr. Fiske. His attitude was that of limp dejection, his head hung low.

"We're both alone," it suggested; "let us bore one another."

Young Mr. Fiske presented the grey with a chunk of bread, at the same time keeping a wary eye on the animal's heels—the only part of him which did not appear to suffer from general decrepitude. The grey, humbled by adversity, allowed himself to be patted softly on his sore ribs.

Comforted by this unostentatious tolerance, young Mr. Fiske went back into the hut and ate his supper. Somehow, he was no longer solitary.

"I'm coming, lad, I'm coming," breathed his father's voice.

What if he had indeed repented of his rash resolution not to face the world anew? Ever since young Mr. Fiske could remember, there had always been a magnetic, telepathic sympathy between them. The voice did not ring in his ears



with its old resolute force, but was muffled, weak, uncertain—the voice of a man who has been broken on the Wheel of Fate. And yet young Mr. Fiske, with strangely lightened heart, took down his father's picture from the wall, and talked to it of happy days to come.

Later, enfolded in velvety darkness, with a proud thrill of possession he once more made a tour of the premises. His nostrils inhaled the perfume of the pines, his spirit drank repose from the cool cisterns of the midnight air. Pausing outside the hut, he heard again that melodious message which has healed the sorrow of more human hearts than all the organ thunder of the world's great epic :

“ Oh, holy Night ! from thee I learn to bear  
What man has borne before ;  
Thou layest thy fingers on the lips of Care,  
And they complain no more.”

He went into the hut, brought out his blankets, and lay down beneath a spreading cedar. A star shone through the branches, the soft breeze fanned his cheek : he was alone with Nature, and with Nature's God.

## CHAPTER VI

### "ROUND THE SQUARE"

WHEN, in the fulness of time, young Mr. Fiske heard himself addressed by familiar Four Cornerites as "Jim," his feelings were greatly shocked. But arguing with himself that he "must grow up with the country," he soon became accustomed to it.

"Jim" sounded pleasantly enough in Celimé's pretty voice, for she always softened it to "M'sieu Jeem." To her, in whatever garb "M'sieu Jeem" appeared, he was always a beautiful being from another sphere. In the early stages of his grief, she had sat on the stairs, night after night, praying to the Holy Virgin to make him a "bon Chrétien," and to heal his hurts. Celimé's prayers for his welfare seemed to have given her a proprietary interest in "M'sieu Jeem," an interest deeper than she was altogether aware. The young man's absolute unconsciousness of her passion for him only seemed to strengthen it. She worshipped him timidly from afar, and would

not have been surprised at any moment had his rough clothes changed to shining armour. There was a shy politeness about “M’sieu Jeem” which won Celimé’s heart.

As her love for him increased, her ribbons became gayer than ever, and L’Oncle Brabette ceased to wonder why so many young fellows sat on the veranda waiting to catch a glimpse of his pretty niece.

Jim generally came in the mornings to Four Corners to work for the sheriff from eight to twelve. Occasionally, however, now that he was becoming a man of affairs, he drove up the old grey, attached to an equally ancient buggy and some prehistoric harness, which was a marvel of tangled rope and ingenuity.

Celimé saw him passing one afternoon, and, under pretence of asking at what price he was selling eggs, contrived to pin a scarlet flower on his somewhat grimy flannel shirt.

Jim looked down at the flaming geranium.

“It’s very kind of you, Celimé, but you should have caught me in my Sunday clothes.”

A sudden pain gripped his heart. For him, the twilight stars were still dark. Though he looked for light, yet was there none; the days of his

mourning were unfulfilled. For aught he knew to the contrary, his father was dead, and he, a stranger in a strange land, went about with a flaming geranium pinned to his shirt. Nothing but his fear of hurting Celimé's feelings prevented him from throwing the offending flower in the dust beneath the grey's ragged hoofs.

In the joy of having him all to herself for a few brief moments, Celimé's face became lovelier than usual. Had Jim been more versed in the ways of women, he would have seen the lovelight in her eyes; but he was not versed in the ways of women, and his heart was sore that Angela seemed to take very little interest in him, although he took the strongest possible interest in her. He gazed kindly at Celimé, and noticed the little tendrils of wind-swept hair clustering round her brown forehead, her dainty ribbons and flushed cheeks, the sensitive, mobile mouth rippling into laughter, and full of expression. She nearly wept to see his blistered hands.

"W'at for you mak' dem like dat? Sit in de offis wit' M'sieu Ole Man. Mebbe you be sheriff some tam."

She ran into the house, and came back with a cooling lotion for his blisters.

Jim shook his head as Celimé poured the soothing



stuff on his blistered palms. Perhaps she was right. He might be happier in the village. Sometimes the sylvan solitude of his little farm palled upon him, for there was a mysterious grief in Nature which fed his own sorrow.

When the day's work was done—the grey horse “bedded down” with as much care as if he had been a valuable hunter instead of an old framework of bone and hide, the red and white cow milked, the fowls shooed into the stable, to-morrow's firewood split—he had time to think, to gaze at the mysterious mountains, hear the murmuring river, listen to the manifold creeping forest things, ask himself the meaning of life, the meaning of death, the meaning of a man's destiny, the cause of its beginning and ending, whether the Indian's Manitou and Parson Trail's God were one and the same under a different name, and the thousand other questions with which everyone has vainly perplexed his soul since the beginning of Time.

Celimé, watching his changing expression, put her pretty hand upon his arm.

“M'sieu Jeem!” she said softly, and there was a catch in her voice. “M'sieu Jeem!”

“Yes, Celimé?”

"Eet's curis t'ing, you leev leetle w'ile here and—forget."

"Forget! You don't understand, Celimé. I forget nothing; but I have to work to earn my daily bread; and work prevents one from thinking."

She pointed towards his hut, although it was hidden by the Bush.

"I leef our place for soirée on Thibaudeau Street, and somet'ing tak' me down dere. I creep up close, you not mak' to see me. Why you sit on tree, and look so?" She gazed into the distant sky with an abstracted air. "W'at you see up dere?"

"I don't know, Celimé. People leave me pretty much to myself, except when they try to sell me something I don't want, and they don't want either."

Celimé laughed. "You not buy any more ole vaches? You got no monee?"

"No; not more than a few dollars." Jim drew himself up. "But I'm putting on muscle, learning to work, beginning to understand things." He looked round. "You won't think me cracked, Celimé, if I tell you something?"

"Cerackt! W'at ees dis 'cerackt'?" Celimé looked puzzled. "Crazee?"

"Yes; that's it." He stroked the old horse absently with the end of his whip. "I've an idea my father

isn't dead ; that some day he'll come back to me ; some day, when I'm sitting on the old stump all alone, he'll tramp through the Bush, his eyes shining, hands outstretched, crying : 'Lad, lad, lad ! I'm hungry for you. I couldn't keep away from you. I couldn't rest without you. God heard my prayer, gave me life and sunlight for the blackness of the grave, led me to you once again.' I think and think and think until he takes shape in the darkness ; I feel his hand upon my shoulder, all the gladness of life comes back to me. Ah, Celimé ! you can't tell what it is to have the darkness gather round you, shut you in, and to know that outside of it there's a living, breathing, moving world in which you haven't any part, in which you're not wanted, in which there's no place for you ; you do not know what it feels like to find yourself a stranger in a strange land, dependent for your bread on Old Man's kindness. A beg—”

Celimé became indignant. That her hero, her idol, should call himself a beggar was not to be endured.

“Why you stay all alone wit' yourself? You great, strong man some tam. You mak' plaintee dollars, build beeg house, feex up beeg farm way back on de Bush ; you mak' marie.”

The young fellow's mood changed.

"Of course I shall. You're quite right. I was always a bit of a dreamer, Celimé, and no one can make his fortune by dreaming." He gathered up the reins, and prepared to awaken the old grey from the habitual reverie in which that equine misanthrope spent twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four. "Always a bit of a dreamer. It's only in dreams one seems to understand."

"You dream, hey? You dream? Who you dream 'bout? I dream too, some tam; but eet ees always de same dream. Ah, always de same!" In her desire to comfort him, to touch him—the joy of his presence—she lost her timidity. Her pretty face drew closer to his as he bent down from the buggy. He could see the audacious scarlet of her lips, the flashing dark eyes, the white teeth, the oval features, the black hair with its red ribbon, the trim waist and dainty figure, the brown clear skin. "M'sieu Jeem! M'sieu Jeem!"

"Yes, Celimé; what is it? The old horse is fast asleep again."

She came nearer to the buggy, and put a trim foot on the step.

"He ees like some pipple. Very hard job for wak' him up. S'pose I try!"



With a light leap she was beside him, took the reins out of his stiff hands, and chirruped to the old horse.

The young man leaned back, half-angry, half-amused. Four Corners seemed to be steeped in after-dinner slumber, and the one animal visible was a cow strolling leisurely down past the Post Office with a ruminant contempt for municipal regulations.

Presently a young dog bounded out of a store and bit at the cow's heels. In a leisurely, contemplative, listless kind of way, the cow slowly drew up her left hind-leg, made a quick thrust, and the dog, hurled back some ten or twelve feet, put his nose in the air and howled with astonishment.

“La, la, la! He ees onlee ze leetle puppee. He not know w'at hit heem.”

By this time Celimé had awakened the old grey, and was driving him slowly around the Square. When they reached the Court-house, every denizen of Four Corners appeared on the street in the joyous expectation of witnessing a dog-fight. Disappointed of this, people turned their attention to the antique buggy. The editor of the *Four Corners Gazette* bowed with condescending familiarity to Celimé, the Registrar poked his nose out of the cupboard

where he kept the land records, and the gaoler looked up from his new grape-vine to nod a kindly greeting. Brisebois, the owner of the tavern at the next corner of the Square, facetiously wanted to know "Why you tak' my customaire?" and outside the Post Office, as if by a miracle, clustered every other notability of Four Corners.

Jim began to feel the embarrassment of the situation. Why did all these people stare at him so curiously, and smile at the pretty girl, glowing with triumph by his side?

"You'll get sunstroke without your hat," he said, as they drew up at L'Oncle Brabette's, and he jumped out to assist Celimé to alight.

Light as a bird on the wing, the girl poised herself upon the rickety old buggy-wheel, gave a spring, caught her foot in the reins, and fell into his arms. For a moment he felt her panting breath upon his cheek, her soft lips touched his; he heard her passionate little triumphant cry of "Ah-h! M'sieu Jeem! M'sieu Jeem!" and indignant, ashamed, bewildered, freed himself from her embrace, only to find Miss Drex passing within a yard of them—passing as if the street were empty.

He saw the calm, cold, distant scorn of her eyes, the way in which she drew her skirt aside to avoid

the contamination of his touch. When he recovered from the shock, he was alone.

“What have I done?” he asked himself, miserably surveying the old grey. “What have I done?”

A blind was drawn back, and Celimé’s half-frightened, wholly impudent and piquante face laughed down at him. The lad, startled by its sudden self-revelation, looked at her in amazement. Was this the quiet, gentle, retiring Celimé, with her soft, low voice and pretty ways—this triumphant, radiant, laughing girl, her scarlet lips pouting in the sunlight, her eyes glowing, her lips parted in a smile which was close akin to tears? What had transformed her? What had he done?

She answered his unspoken question.

“You have mak’ to spark de girl, M’sieu Jeem,” she said, with a little bubble of laughter, though there were tears in her voice. “You have mak’ to spark de girl.”

“Spark! Celimé, are you mad?”

She leaned a little further out of the window, a whole world of mingled joy and sadness in her beautiful face.

“W’at we done? W’at we done? Ah! Mon Dieu! We have done somet’ing in a hurree. We have mak’ to open de gates of de world. Ah-h!

De gates of de world, M'sieu Jeem. And dey can nevaire be shut again—nevaire!”

“Gates of the ——! Why, Celimé, I couldn't help your tumbling out of the buggy just now. What have we done, anyway, that you should be so queer about it?”

“We have— Come in, M'sieu Jeem. Come in.” She began to sing :

“ ‘ She's geev him so soon he's come on de door,  
Du vin de pays, and some nice galettes.’ ”

Come in, M'sieu Jeem. Come in.”

He shook his head, as a soft, gurgling laughter swelled her pretty throat and issued from her lips.

“W'at have ——! Cheri! Ange de mon âme! W'at have ——! I t'ink you know verree well. Ask M'sieu Ole Man.”

She pouted and shut the window.

He fancied he heard a sob as she turned away. Truly, the sun had affected the girl's brain; she must have suddenly gone mad. And Miss Drex would put the worst possible construction on the whole thing, and fancy that it arose from the closest familiarity. In his anger, he felt that Celimé had



destroyed all his gratitude for her past kindness to him.

Greatly to that equine wreck's surprise, Jim wrenched the grey's head round, and started him towards the Court-house. When he went into the sheriff's office, no one was there. The cool gloom was welcome after the hot sunshine, his head nodded drowsily forward, for he had been up since daybreak. Old Man came in a few minutes later, and found him asleep.

Old Man glanced at him in perplexity, then a quizzical grin spread over his shrewd features.

“I did orter ha' looked out for this,” he said. “I did orter ha' kept an eye on that minx. She's com-prom-ised him—com-prom-ised him. That's what she's done; and I've let her do it. To know what to do, is to know you orter do it. Angela's real mad, and madder 'n ever when she see I noticed it.”

He looked with satisfaction at the young man's sunburned features, his toughened hands.

“Here 've I pulled him out of the Valley of the Shadder, and that girl's doin' her best to git him into it agin. She knew what she was doin', though he didn't. It comes quicker to a girl, somehow. She's hankered arter him ever since he came here. These

French girls has a takin' way, with their dainty gowns and ribbons, and a smile that 'ud coax a babe out of its mother's arms. She's coaxed the lad into hers, and, for Angela's sake, I'll have to coax him out agin. 'Sides, she's a Catholic, and he ain't. Them mixed marriages ain't never no good. If it's nipped in time, she'll forgit all about it in a week, although she allers was a tender-hearted little thing. I minds her that high," he added reminiscently, putting his hand a foot from the floor. "That high! Now to smite our young friend hip and thigh, and show him how he's bin took by veiled eyelids, so to speak. Gosh, but she's the prettiest girl in Four Corners!"

He fixed his eyes on Jim, and the latter awoke with a start, disturbed by the mesmeric power which was one of Old Man's most striking attributes.

"Where am— Oh, that you, Old Man?"

"Dunno," said Old Man severely — "dunno. When I think of people's onabashed goins'-on here, and them furriners too, in broad daylight—broad daylight, mind you!—I'm dubersome about it. Broad sunlight, mind you—broad sunlight! That's what gits me. Why, it's enuff to make Joshua stand still."

He turned his back on Jim, and began elaborate preparations for filling his pipe.

Jim had him by the arm in a moment.

“Old Man, what’s the meaning of this? You’re angry with me. Angry with me! What have I done? What’s the meaning of it?”

“Seems to me,” Old Man carefully filled his pipe — “seems to me ’taint so long since you first come here, as you must take to marryin’ and givin’ in marriage.”

“Mar— Old Man, are you mad?”

“No, I ain’t mad,” said Old Man, wilfully misunderstanding him, and repenting his momentary wrath. “Not real mad. I’m only sorter sorry. When a gal’s took a fancy to you, and can’t help herself, you didn’t orter encourage her.”

“But, Old Man, you don’t believe it? I give you my word of honour as a gentleman such an idea never entered my head.”

Old Man grabbed him by the shoulder, and held up his face to the light. “Honest Injun?”

“Honest Injun!”

“I did orter ha’ known. I was a dum fool,” said Old Man apologetically, for there was no mistaking Jim’s transparent honesty and truth.

Jim, annoyed in his turn, moved proudly away.

"I'm very much obliged to you for all you've done for me, Old Man, but if you think I'd lie to you—to you!—it's time I put out. You can take the farm, and that infernal old grey horse that's got me into all this trouble, and everything else, and I'll shake the dust of Four Corners off my feet, and—and thank you, and—and good-bye!"

Old Man reached out a long, hairy hand to stay him.

"Come here, sonny," he said gently. "Don't stand swellin' there like a turkey gobbler. Cryer, call on this yer case."

"What case?"

"Public Opinyun *versus*—which is Latin, and means agin—you."

The young man's naturally sweet temper gave way.

"What the devil have I done, Old Man, that my best friends should turn on me like this? I'm sure I've tried to please everybody."

Old Man looked at him again. Suddenly a huge grin spread over his features. He laughed silently.

"I did orter ha' known—I did orter ha' known."

"Ought to have known what?"

"As you didn't know nothin'."



“I’m very much obliged to you. Since you have so poor an opinion of me, I—I—”

“That’s all right, sonny; that’s all right. Don’t you swell. Don’t you swell. You don’t know no more about it’n a babe unborn.”

Jim halted in front of Old Man, reached out, took him squarely by the shoulders, and shook him.

“Now, Old Man, before I go clean, slam-jam, stark, staring, raving, hopelessly insane, will you kindly explain to me what is the matter? I came up here to sell eggs this afternoon, and—”

“And you’ve bin and gone and got engaged to be married to Celimé,” quietly interrupted Old Man.

“Engaged—to—Celimé!” The lad staggered against the wall, and put his hand to his forehead in a despairing sort of way. “You—you’ve not been out in the sun, Old Man?” he asked anxiously. “You wouldn’t like to lie down a bit until you feel better and come to your senses? Of course, I know your post’s a very trying one, and you must feel the strain a bit sometimes, and get a little mixed—”

“Oh, I’m all right, sonny. Don’t you worry about my senses. There ain’t much the matter with them. D’you mean to say, in your cussed English ignorance, as you didn’t know all them habitants, when they gits fixed up to marry, drives round the Square as a public

intermation of the fac', sorter publishin' the news, so to speak?"

"W-what?"

"You druv round with Celimé, didn't you?"

"Of course I did. She said—"

"It don't matter what *she* said. And she druv, didn't she?"

"Ye-es. She—"

"Well, there you are. The girl allers drives juss to show it's goin' to be t'other way round when they're hitched. In the midst of life, we are in marriage, so to speak. It's only a little way from L'Oncle Brabette's to the Square, and it's less from the Square to the church. This wants thinkin' over."

"What's the good of thinking about it? All the thinking in the world won't knock the idea out of some people's thick heads."

"It takes a lot of thinkin' to knock it into some people's thick heads. What are you goin' to do about it?"

"Do! I don't know. I shall go mad! I shall go mad!"

"No, you won't. You juss go home, sonny; and, mind me, don't you stop on the way down, or you'll make matters wuss. The girl's just over head and ears and heart and soul in love with you, and you

ain't no right to hurt her. Come to think of it, she ain't any too strong, neither.”

“But I tell you, I didn't intend—”

“It don't matter what you intended. ‘By their ways ye shall know them.’ It's what you did, *pro magnum bonum*, as the lawyers say.”

“But I'm astonished. She's usually such a dear, sweet, gentle, quiet girl—the most modest, shy—”

Old Man got up and stretched himself, with a smile at the lad's inexperience.

“Yes; they're all like that till—”

“Till?” Jim's voice came in a husky whisper.

“Till they've tasted blood.”

“Tasted—blood!”

Old Man made a significant smack with his lips, and the scarlet flamed into Jim's cheeks.

“I was comin' down by the Post Office just in time to see that flyin' leap out of the buggy. Neatest ankles in Four Corners,” he mused, then pulled himself up again with judicial severity. “Mind, I don't blame you. It might have happened to me. I won't say as it ain't—years ago when I was a dum fool like you, and didn't know nothin'.”

“I wish it had happened to you,” viciously retorted the young man. “With all your vast experience, you wouldn't have been taken by surprise.”

## The Marble City

"Oh, I'm not denyin' wuss things 'n that has happened to me by and large, sonny—by and large," said Old Man, dallying with bygone memories. "You juss go home, and I'll try to straighten things out. Don't you speak to that girl; that 'ill make her ashamed of herself when she's cooled down agin. She's just as much s'prised as you are. I reckon she's cryin' her pretty eyes out by this time. I've known her since she was a little brown baby, and I can tell how badly she's feelin' about it now."

"But I can't let her be exposed to misconstruction. I'm going to take all this on my own shoulders. I won't have a word said against Celimé. If I've been a fool—"

"If! Oh, there ain't no manner of doubt about it. You have, sonny—you have. 'Heap big fool,' as the Injuns say. Now, you juss git inter your Pharaoh's chariot, so to speak, and go home and tarry not, for that way 'lieth the pit,'" said Old Man, taking Jim gently by the arm, almost lifting him into the buggy, and putting the reins into his hands.

"But you don't think, Old Man— I can't face all those people. Make it all right for Celimé. I don't care what they think about me, but I won't have her blamed. I'm d—d if I will!"

Old Man affected to be shocked.



“If you was to say words like that when Ikey’s round, he’d lay an information agin you, and we’d have to fine you and divide the proceeds. Keep a stiff upper lip, and sit straight.” He stepped back to scrutinise the grey. “With a hoss like that to drive, nothin’ you might say ought to be took down and used agin you — nothin’. No jury in Four Corners ’ud convict you. Anybody drivin’ ahind a plug like that might forgit to look where they was goin’. Tarry not by the wayside, sonny, or the whole contrapshun ’ill bust up, and you’ll have to carry home the basketfuls as is left of that two-forty-on-a-plank-road trotter of yours.”

The old grey, feeling hungry, declined to listen to any further personalities, shuffled into a shambling trot, and lumbered off down the homeward road.

As young Mr. Fiske passed Brabette’s, he studiously looked the other way, and whistled a would-be lively air, in order to make Celimé feel that he was thoroughly at his ease, and that the ride round the Square was an unpremeditated joke on her part. But all in vain. A window was thrust up, a bunch of roses hit him on the nose; and he knew that Celimé was waiting to see him pass. He fancied he heard her tearful: “M’sieu Jeem! M’sieu Jeem!” as

the roses dropped into the dusty road. It would be the act of a brute to let them lie there.

He jumped out of the buggy, picked them up, and drove on again. Celimé should not feel slighted because of her impulsive act. Of course, she did not know that Miss Drex would see it. Miss Drex ! The scarlet again flamed into his cheeks. What would Miss Drex think of him ? He groaned, and said things which hurt the feelings of even that habitual cynic, the grey horse.

## CHAPTER VII

### MAN AND MAID

ANOTHER beautiful, glowing, unsatisfactory month passed away. On his first appearance in Four Corners, young Mr. Fiske's attire had been so fastidious, so neatly arranged, that the most ardent and cynical Four Cornerites would have felt it an outrage to suggest to this darling of the gods that he should work, like an ordinary mortal, instead of remaining the exquisite human butterfly which Nature evidently intended him to be ; but their surprise speedily turned to warm admiration when Jim, realising that he was dependent on his own exertions, heroically and habitually wore the rough garb of labour as if he liked it, hid his neatly-parted locks beneath an old straw hat, kept his exquisitely-fitting clothes for Sundays only, and laboured, either in Old Man's office or at the farm, from early morn to dewy eve.

Although his recent bereavement shut him out

## The Marble City

from the social amenities of Four Corners, there were many who yearned to render his life less lonely. The fall from his exalted position was so sudden, even the hardest hearts were moved to pity that he should not only be condemned to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, but that he should have selected so uncongenial and apparently unsuccessful a way of doing it. Public sympathy, threateningly instigated by Old Man and his faithful henchman, Ikey, took the form of a present of "stock," in the shape of four yearling heifers and two more cows, gifted with phenomenal appetites — appetites which clamoured to heaven at every hour of the day and night.

Sentimental maidens, too, gazed at him from afar, and, gradually coming nearer, brought Jim soothing balm for blisters as he sat in lonely corners of the wharf on moonlight nights, wondering whether he would ever get rid of his backache, and why the three cows required to be milked with monotonous regularity twice a day. Hitherto, such was his colossal ignorance of dairy matters, he had been under the impression that this delicate attention once a week amply relieved the milky mothers, and it was not until he had lost one of his new cows that he discovered his mistake.



Scoffing Four Cornerites, who attended the cow's impromptu funeral, with bands of black crape round their arms, after vainly advising Jim to sell the carcase for beef, said hard things to him on the subject. Did he imagine that they had put themselves to all the trouble of rearing this particular cow simply for him to murder it? Then they disparagingly departed, and left him to ponder over their emphatic words.

But Jim did not ponder long. As soon as he realised that the cow, with malice aforethought, had departed to the land of the Ponemah just to annoy and discourage him, he promptly wrote off the deceased animal as a bad asset—his elaborate system of book-keeping was a constant source of joyous wonder to outsiders—and continued to milk the two remaining mothers of the herd with unabated assiduity.

In addition to his other bucolic experiences, his first ride on a mowing-machine afflicted Jim with something suspiciously like sea-sickness; and altogether, he speedily began to understand what was meant by the Primal Curse, especially when it chanced that he found it necessary to get up at daybreak to feed the stock. As far as he could make out, the sole ambition of stock appeared to

## The Marble City

be that of feeding at all sorts of unseasonable and unreasonable hours. If they were not fed, they got out of the field, and went up to Four Corners to lodge a complaint with their former owners against him, or else stayed at home by the barn door, and made piteous noises, expressive of their strong disapproval of amateurish methods. Then, of course, the conscience-stricken Jim gave them twice as much food as was necessary, and they became still more zealous in indicating their insatiable discontent.

On Sundays, however, Jim returned to the old life of civilisation; that is to say, he disregarded the clamorous appeals of stock (they always appeared to be hungrier on what was popularly supposed to be a day of rest in Four Corners), shaved himself, put on his best clothes, went to the Presbyterian Church, and listened to Parson Trail's sermons—sermons which were conspicuous for their devotion to fervently realistic descriptions of the nether world. What interested Jim more than the nether world, however, was the swelling music from the church harmonium, as it was called into being by Angela's fair fingers, although, when they met, she ostentatiously ignored him.

In addition, there was a certain stalwart ruffian

named Dick Higginson, who hovered round the fair organist with a proprietary air which caused Jim much internal anguish.

But while he sat in church, as near the door as possible, Jim became fonder of Angela than before. When she was not looking in his direction, there was an air of cheerful goodness about her, in spite of those too-rarely uplifted eyes; when she rose from her seat in the choir, and approached the harmonium with sylph-like grace, the harmonium never made any fuss, but started "right in" with the necessary chant or psalm.

One Sunday, when she was away from church, the harmonium refused "to sing a note," as Deacon Dunn put it, and Jim fully appreciated the delicacy of feeling which prompted the instrument to strike work; for the substitute's fingers were beefy, and not like Angela's. Doubtless, argued the forlorn young Englishman, the harmonium had its likes and dislikes, and probably objected to be touched by anyone but Angela. Jim sympathised with it, and thought more highly of the instrument in consequence.

One Sunday, however, in a sudden accession of boldness, he so far forgot himself as to sit close up by the harmonium. The opening prayer was a very long one, and Jim, devoutly kneeling, found that, by

## The Marble City

looking between his fingers, he could catch a glimpse of Angela's shell-like ear and long-fringed lashes—lashes so long that they cast little shadows on her cheeks. Thinking himself unobserved, he allowed his feelings to appear in his own sunny blue eyes. Unconsciously to himself, they prayed at her—prayed for her love, for her companionship, for her sympathy in his trials with stock, for all the thousand-and-one reasons which draw a man irresistibly towards the destined maid. He forgot all about Celimé, and prayed to Angela to forget all about her too.

Angela (she also looked through her fingers at Jim) discovered something in his innocent eyes which filled her with momentary pity. Perhaps she had misjudged him, after all, and must make an opportunity for him to explain his adventure with Celimé. When, however, the service was over, she was momentarily delayed by Mr. Dick Higginson, and on reaching the porch, saw Jim's light grey suit "streakin' down town as if there were a mad dog after it." Mr. Higginson did not gain in Angela's favour by this unfeeling remark. Further, she became almost fierce when he felt his brawny muscles, and declaring that life was dull at Four Corners, said that, "in spite of Old Man and Ikey,



he'd half a mind to call on Jim, and mop the floor with him just to help pass the time."

"What has the poor fellow done to you, you cowardly bully?" asked the indignant Angela. "Touch him, and I'll never speak to you again. I shall never be happy—not thoroughly happy—until someone breaks every bone in your clumsy body."

"I ketched him lookin' at you all meetin'," declared Mr. Higginson jealously; "and I'm just goin' to impress on him the propriety of lettin' you alone, seein' you're courtin' with me, so to speak."

He made this audacious assertion with an easy confidence, but dared not look at Angela, whose dark eyes began to glitter ominously.

"I'll trouble you to say that again," she said haughtily.

Mr. Higginson repeated his statement at the outside of Old Man's gate. As he did so, Angela signalled to the recumbent form of Old Man, and he uncoiled about six-feet-two of that magnificent and wiry manhood before which better men than Mr. Higginson had been known to quail.

"I want you to do me another favour, Old Man," said Angela, with bewitching sweetness, as she

## The Marble City

gathered her dainty skirt away from the defiling touch of a potato-bug on the side-walk. "I want you to do me another favour, there's a dear."

"Anything," cheerfully replied Old Man, strolling down to the gate in his shirt-sleeves, and surveying her companion with marked disapproval. "Anything, so long as it ain't to dress up and drag me into that meetin' of yours. When I've settled down to a quiet old age, mebbe I'll come; but I've one or two little argeyments still on hand, and I don't feel drawn towards the Mourner's Bench just yet, so to speak. I couldn't face my Maker till I'd cleared them up, and dusted the floor with one or two of them Carbery fellows as 'lowed I was gittin' past my prime."

"I want you either to 'dust the floor' with this"—she pointed scornfully at Mr. Higginson—"or else blow its head off with your gun, if it ever presumes to speak to me again."

"You don't mean it, Miss Drex?" implored Mr. Higginson. "Say it's only your fun."

Old Man brightened up at once.

"That's all? Why, cert'nly! 'Taint wuth makin' all this yer fuss about a trifle like that. Seein' as it's Sunday, p'raps I'd better blow his head off. 'It is more seemlier so to do,' as your hymn-book says. If

we was to git scrappin' round now, Parson Trail might hear of it and make a fuss. You wait a minute, Dick, and I'll fetch the old gun. You kin say your prayers whiles I'm loadin' her up."

He strolled leisurely towards the house, with a careless stretch of his huge muscles.

"You mean it, Miss Drex?" again asked Mr. Higginson, with evident anguish. "Seein' as it's Sunday, I ain't loaded up, and anyways, I wouldn't like to draw on Old Man, he bein' a friend of yours."

"Old Man will 'draw' on you in a minute, if you're not off," said the thoroughly aroused Angela. "I've been meaning for some time past to tell you how unwelcome were your intentions. But you never can take a hint, unless it comes out of a shot-gun."

"But—but—"

"You're a coward and a bully, and I don't want to have anything more to do with you. Better go away before Old Man's ready with the shot-gun."

Old Man appeared in the porch with his muzzle-loader and a handful of buck-shot. He had a beautiful tenor voice, and hummed his favourite—"It is more seemlier so to do," as he measured out the buck-shot into the palm of his hand. When he had finished his preparations, he strolled down

to the gate just in time to see the flying figure of Mr. Higginson turn a corner.

"Seems in a hurry," he said, with a grin.

Angela tossed her pretty head.

"Was you partik'lar wishful about my drawin' on him?" asked Old Man. "Seems wastin' good buck-shot."

"No, Old Man. Only he wants to bully young Mr. Fiske. I knew you wouldn't stand that."

Old Man nodded.

"Not much. Jim's a high-toned feller—real high-toned," he said sympathetically. He took Angela by the hand and looked into her eyes. Something he saw there checked his next speech. "I don't know as he wouldn't make a change for you from them darned Montreallers. It's all a mistake about Celimé. If you're sot on him, Angela, now I have got the gun loaded, I'll go down and bring him up."

Angela blushed becomingly.

"If I want anyone brought up, Old Man, I can do all the bringing up that's necessary."

"That's so—that's so," said Old Man, trying to hide his bewilderment. "Lately, you ain't seemed to take no stock in him, so to speak; and sometimes a shot-gun does come in sorter handy in these yer little matters of sentiment. Guess I wouldn't stay prim,



if I was you. When a girl stays prim, a young feller hitches on to someone else as ain't so dum partik'lar. I'd lure him on a bit. He kinder runs away from your shadder nowadays, which shows he thinks a lot of you ;" and Old Man strolled back to the house, put down his gun, and stretched his long form in a rocker.

Angela gazed after him with dewy eyes. A mile below, on the Ottawa bank, a thin, straggling column of blue smoke rose from Jim's lonely dwelling. From afar off, she could hear the constant lowing of young cattle, remorselessly bent on taking advantage of their owner's inexperience.

"Poor fellow!" she said sympathetically. "Poor fellow! Perhaps I have been too unkind to him. Why does he run away like that? Is he afraid I want to eat him? He has only to explain that Celimé affair, for me to forgive him. Why, he must be killing himself with his own cookery! He hasn't said a word to me; and he didn't think I saw him staring at me all the morning. It was very wicked of him, but he never took his eyes off me."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RIVALS

NOTHING happened for a few weeks, and Angela began to feel provoked with Jim's evidently overwhelming shyness, his inability to believe that she would ever learn to forgive him all his iniquities. In church, his eyes prayed to hers ; after a time, hers began to pray back again. She could not help it, and, notwithstanding her outward coldness to him, she did not want to help it. He loved her ; his eyes told her so a thousand times as the service dragged on. She also loved Parson Trail's long prayers, because, thinking himself unobserved, Jim worshipped her in a perfect ecstasy. She, in return, spoke to him through the harmonium, although the congregation knew it not. But he did not call at the boarding-house, or seek her out in any way, and she gradually came to the conclusion that he was waiting to win his spurs before laying his heart at her feet.

Without a word from her, Old Man must have arrived at the same conclusion, for he passed round universal hints that Jim was to be helped and instructed in every possible way, and that anyone molesting him would have to render a detailed account for so doing.

One day Jim met Angela on the side-walk, and stood aside, hat in hand, to let her pass. Their eyes glowed as she forgot to be frigid, and thanked him sweetly. For the next hundred yards, Angela underwent the severest struggle of her life. She wanted to look back and see him again. Mercifully, she had to make a half-turn to go up the Post Office steps, and in so doing, saw something which brought another blush to her cheeks. Jim stood exactly where she had left him, gazing at the imprint of her pretty feet in the dust, while the ancient grey strolled round the village, looking up a few friends in the neighbouring sheds.

Angela was forced to stay in the Post Office fully ten minutes before he moved. She could almost hear him sigh as he suddenly became aware that the grey had disappeared, and started off in reluctant pursuit.

"Seems some sort of animal has took to our orchard at nights," her host drily remarked that

evening. "It comes rustlin' round about ten o'clock under your winder. Maybe it's a bear from t'other side of the river. They hankers powerfully arter pork, and I ain't so blamed fond of 'em as to feed permiskus bears, anyway."

Angela said nothing, for the twinkle in her host's eye showed that he knew all about the mysterious marauder. Still, she deemed it safer to take certain measures; and Deacon Faraway, before going to bed that evening, tested his gun with the ramrod. As he expected, he found that someone had tampered with the charge.

"Reckon they've got it pretty bad," he said to his old gun. "I wouldn't give much for Dick Higginson's chances. No, sir."

It was the Carbery picnic which still further complicated matters in this distressful love-story—a story destined to go amiss from the very beginning. Jim had been invited by a deputation of village maidens to join in the picnic, but, with his customary bashfulness, declined, on the ground that he had not yet re-entered society. Afterwards, when he heard that Angela was to be one of the party, he could have kicked himself for his stupidity. All day long he pondered over it, mixed matters up generally, nearly cut off his finger with a chaff-cutter, and was kicked



in the stomach by the irascible old grey, who had been without food for twice the proper time, and resented his master's absent-mindedness in the most forcible way possible.

The stock, too, went astray, and had to be hunted up in the mosquito-infested Bush; the cows declined to yield their milk without more than the usual effort on his part; and Jim, weary and worn out with the labours of the day, suddenly came to a desperate resolution. He would meet the picnickers on the way back, and ask Angela to listen to his explanation about Celimé. Was there not one bewitching suit of summer clothing still unworn, which reposed in the bottom of his trunk? He had saved it up for some crisis in his life, and felt sure that the crisis had arrived.

After supper, he hastily effaced all marks of toil, and arrayed himself in the new suit. He also put on some patent leather boots which would have melted a heart of stone; his salmon-pink tie was a dream of loveliness; and his neat, active figure looked well in the pearly-grey clothes. On examining his hands, he came to the conclusion that gloves would be superfluous; they were just the right mahogany colour for dogskin.

"What this house wants," he said resolutely, as

## The Marble City

he slammed the door, and carefully picked his way down the path, "is a mistress; and if I've any luck with farming, a mistress it shall have before I'm many years older, or I'll go back to London City, and waste the rest of my life in a bank, instead of becoming a man in this glorious country. I'm sure the dad would wish me to settle down and succeed."

Then he forgot all about Angela in sorrowful reminiscences of his father. Biting his lips, he resolutely walked onward.

A mosquito alighted on his nose, and somewhat modified his enthusiasm as he strode along the Carbery Road through the faint moonlight. The dense Bush came up to within three or four yards of each side of the road, and the light which filtered through the overhanging boughs cast a chequered pattern on the dusty highway. Occasionally a blundering night-moth brushed against his mosquito-inflamed nose and made him say things; but for the most part, he went on wrapped in the glory of love's young dream, and wondering how he could ever have the courage to make known to Angela how much he yearned for a removal of the misunderstanding between them.

When about half-way to Carbery, he heard the merry voices of the picnickers as, singing in the

moonlight, they slowly ascended the hill. Most of them had got out of the buggies, and were walking, in order to ease the tired horses. What should he say to them—how account for his presence there? In the solitude of his own home, it had all seemed so easy and natural. They would laugh at him, quiz him, pass him by on the other side. In another moment they would be round the corner, and see him standing there like a clumsy fool, with his mouth open. What could he do with his hands? Why had he forgotten to bring a stick? Why—ah-h!

Suddenly a small black-and-white puppy gambolled across the road. The poor little thing was evidently lost. If he could pick it up and play with it, the situation was saved. Nothing more easy and natural in the world than to say: "Just found this little pup. Isn't it jolly? Would you like to have it, Miss Drex?" The picnickers would gather round, play with the pup, she would smile on him; and then, perhaps, he would find himself alone with her, be able to explain things.

He hastily rushed towards the puppy, caught it, and walked forward as the picnickers turned the corner.

There was a sudden shriek of horror; everyone got out of the way—behind trees, into buggies,

## The Marble City

anywhere beyond his reach ; a sickening smell polluted the summer air. It was not musk—and yet it had a flavour of over-ripe musk, or of cheese suffering from senile decay ; it was not asafoetida—and yet it smelt nastier. It was more like the old chronicler's verse about Cologne, wherein he describes that ancient city as having

“Forty well-defined and separate stinks.”

Only, in this instance, there appeared to be four thousand ; and they all emanated from the little animal struggling in Jim's arms.

“Put it down ! Put it down !” cried Angela's anguished voice, from behind a tree. “It's a young skunk !”

In the midst of his anguish, Jim carried the loathsome little beast as far away as possible from Angela before letting it go, although every second's contact with it made matters worse for himself. When it had resentfully disappeared in the undergrowth, leaving intensely malodorous memories behind, everyone who had not already done so climbed into their buggies and said nasty things to Jim, who remained dumbfounded in the middle of the road.

“Whip up the horses, and get out of this,” said one



girl, "or we shall all be sick." "Leave the fool to his folly," said another, "since he's so fond of skunks." "Spoiled his pretty clothes too—he! he!" said Mr. Higginson, with a cheerful grin, as they drove off.

Angela, in silence, went with the others. She was very proud, and could not take her place beside a man who had made himself so supremely ridiculous.

Only Celimé remained: there were tears in her eyes. All day long she had been conscious of Angela's scorn, and the consciousness had made her very unhappy. Angela had deserted Jim. She, Celimé, would never desert him, although he, too, scarcely ever spoke to her when they met. She had long since repented of her unmaidenly conduct. If she were good to him now, in this fresh misfortune which had overtaken him, perhaps he would learn to forgive her, perhaps in time he would understand, and take her to his heart, and tell her that she was the one girl in the world for him—the one girl to look after his little cabane, attend to the stock, and make his days a dream of happiness. She would show him the difference between her love and the frigid affection of this stuck-up "school-marm," whom she hated. She called to Jim:

## The Marble City

"M'sieu Jeem! M'sieu Jeem! It ees all right. I mak' to come back to you."

Unheeding her words, "M'sieu Jeem" lay down in the middle of the road, and rolled in the dust. Perhaps that would rid him of this penetrating effluvium. Now he understood how even Civilisation itself is sometimes powerless before the forces of Nature. The healing influences of the night, cool dews, soft winds, could not lessen his pain, could not make him clean. What should he do? What could he do?

Half an hour later, he was about to give himself another roll in the dust, when the rattle of returning buggy-wheels caught his ear. This was a way out of the difficulty. He sat up in the middle of the road. Let the wheels of his rival's chariot ride over him and crush him in the dust. It was better that it should be so. He was unclean! Unclean! Unclean as any leper with his melancholy bell to warn the passers-by. Unclean! He groaned and rolled again in the dust. The horse's feet were coming nearer and nearer still. In a minute more he would be crushed beneath them.

The horse was pulled up, and Celimé's voice, full of pitying sweetness, broke upon his ear:

"Ees dat you, M'sieu Jeem?"

"I don't know," he groaned, and rose to his knees, then wildly waved her off. "Go away. Oh, please go away! Leave me to my misery. It's very kind of you, but you'd better go and laugh with the others."

The girl had a handkerchief tied round her nostrils, and her voice was muffled.

"You mak' to listen?" she asked, somewhat indistinctly.

He ungratefully declared that he did not want to listen to anyone.

"You mak' to listen, M'sieu Jeem." There was a tremor in her voice.

Jim said that he wanted to die.

She threw a small package into the road near him.

"Dat is savon—soap. You pick heem up."

He picked it up.

"'Bout hun'red yards you come to Ottawa River. Tak' off your clothes—everyt'ing! everyt'ing! You not keep notings on."

"But—"

"Get into de river, and soap—soap—soap, until you don't feel lonesome no more. Den come out higher. L'Oncle Brabette's Sunday clothes are dere—he not know I find dem—and dere's not very long tam, you come out all right."

## The Marble City

"You are an angel from heaven!" He clutched the soap. "An angel from heaven! You will not wait for me to thank you? When—when shall I see you again?"

"Dat's not correc' t'ing for poor Celimé, but I wait hun'red yards higher up."

She turned the horse round, and drove rapidly away, waving her hand encouragingly as she did so.

Jim tore like a madman down the bank, still clutching his precious packet of soap. Should anything happen to that, he would be doubly lost. Once his footing failed him, and he rolled onwards; but in the midst of the uncertainty as to where he was to bring up, he never let go of the soap. The one predominant idea in his mind was that soap meant salvation—bodily and mental.

At length he reached the edge of the trees, and saw the brown waters of the Ottawa glistening in the placid moonlight. He threw the soap on the sandy shore, stripped off his things, flung them far into the Bush, walked nudely through the moonlight to the rippling flood, plunged into its cool waters, dived deep and long, until he almost broke a blood-vessel, swam in a semi-circle, then returned to the shore, soaped himself with renewed fervour, broke into



the water again, came back, soaped himself once more, rolled in the sand, and took a final plunge, wading along higher up until he saw a bundle of garments on a rock and a big towel.

Joy! The taint had gone; he was once more clean.

Ten minutes later, Celimé, patiently waiting on the high road, saw a grotesque figure crawl slowly towards her, clad in a voluminous mass of clothes. It dawned upon her that L'Oncle Brabette was six-feet-four in height, and that Jim had found it necessary to double up the trouser legs until they nearly reached his waist. His coat-tails dragged in the dust, his baggy waistcoat hung to his knees, and his bare pink toes (she had not thought of bringing either shoes or socks in her wild excitement) left a little pattern on the road.

"I can never thank you enough," he said, pausing by the side of the buggy. "May I sit beside you? The—the aroma has vanished."

"Yes," she said slowly. "It is not round de Square dis tam. Ah, non! But now—"

"Now?" He swung himself up on the buggy, without a thought of his precarious costume.

"Now," she said, turning towards him the light of her glorious eyes, not dancing with mischief, but

lustrous with unshed tears, "I not feel lonesome no more."

Grateful, freed from intolerable wretchedness, the young man stammered his thanks to her in a few broken phrases. But Celimé was happy—deliriously happy. Her hero no longer spoke coldly to her, no longer turned aside, but took her hand, murmured gentle words of gratitude and thanks. She was in a seventh heaven of delight, and so absorbed by her happiness that she was scarcely able to pull up in time to avoid running down a horse driven furiously by Angela Drex.

There was a bundle of clothes on the seat beside Angela ; and Celimé instinctively guessed that the latter was bent on the same errand as herself. Only, she had been first—she had been first. Whatever happened, she had been first.

Angela, pulling her horse on its haunches, paused dismayed, ashamed of the impulse which had made her borrow clothes from Old Man, in order to come to Jim's rescue.

"I might have known," she murmured bitterly—"I might have known that girl would be before me."

Angela wrenched the horse round, gave it a slash with her whip, and drove hurriedly homeward. She washed her hands of young Mr. Fiske ; her cheeks

glowed with shame. Why had she allowed him to see that she was interested in him? Now, he could go to his French girl. She would return to Montreal. She again whipped up her horse, and dashed onward through the night.

The stupefied Jim got out of Celimé's buggy opposite the track leading to his little farm; but he had seen Angela's bundle. She pitied him. That was enough. He put out his hand to Celimé with another incoherent murmur of thanks.

Celimé, her eyes full of tears, flung it aside, slashed her unoffending horse, and also drove swiftly away through the night, leaving him standing there, clad in L'Oncle Brabette's best broadcloth.

Suddenly she turned round, came back again, leaped from the buggy, took his hand.

"M'sieu Jeem! M'sieu Jeem! I am verree sorree for myself. Sometam, I t'ink I go crazee;" and again drove away.

An owl jeered at him with sardonic emphasis; a squirrel, half-asleep, looked down from an elm branch, as he waddled onward, leaving the imprint of his feet in the dusty track. For once, the grey was sympathetic, and muzzled up to him by the garden gate.

He sat down on the steps, vaguely comforted by

the old horse's presence, and wondered how he could ever straighten out this tangled skein. But still, in the midst of all his trouble, his sorrow for Celimé, his heart beat with a strange, new delight. Angela had been willing to come to his rescue. He hugged the old horse, and told him all about it—what a wonderful girl Angela was, how beautiful, how good!

And in her little room, with its shrine to the Holy Virgin in the corner, its dainty ribbons and snowy bed, Celimé cried her pretty eyes out, as she vainly tried to sleep.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE "DRAGON" POOL

YOUNG Mr. Fiske began to be torn by conflicting emotions as to his own varying identities, for he was a stranger in a strange land ; his father was, presumably, dead ; he was a farmer who had yet to learn the rudiments of agricultural science ; and there was Angela.

Unfortunately, there was also Celimé. When he thought of Celimé, he was a little frightened, although grateful, that she should have taken compassion on his loneliness. She was so warm-hearted and impulsive that she had not known what she was doing when she had kissed him. He wanted to see her again, to tell her that he understood that she meant to be kind to him, and nothing more. Yet there was Angela.

By some strange chance, whenever he saw Celimé, Angela was not far off. Perhaps it would be kinder to avoid Celimé. Then people would not couple her

name with his. He sighed to lose so sweet a friend, felt conscious of the basest ingratitude towards her ; but—there was Angela.

The hardening process was going on rapidly with young Mr. Fiske. A little while ago he had been a careless butterfly, sipping life's honey from every flower. Now he was acquainted with grief, akin to sorrow, in touch with Nature, hardening, growing up into vigorous manhood, and yet as perplexed as a little child. Everything appeared to come with a rush. Before he recovered from one shock, something else happened to give him food for thought—that is, when he had time to think—which was but seldom ; for what with the vagaries of stock, the uncertain temperament of the ancient grey, and the intricacies of the documents confided to him with unquestioning trust by Old Man, his hands were full from sunrise to sunset.

Sunday, however, brought compensation with it as a day of comparative repose. Now that Angela no longer spoke to him when they met—an ordeal which shook him from head to foot—he remained at the end of the church close to the door, so that he could slip out long before the rest of the congregation, and “streak down” to look after his mid-day meal. At times, Angela's beautiful face shone towards him

through an aureole of sulphurous flames, conjured up by Parson Trail's vigorous sermons—sermons which, as Old Man feelingly observed, were "full of hell as an egg is of meat."

Most Four Cornerites would have been insulted had their future been depicted to them in less glowing colours, and took a reflected pride in the Parson's exertions on their behalf. They were his "cross"; it behoved every individual one of them to make him feel it. The more the good man struggled to convert them, the better would be his own chances of preferment in the next world; and Parson Trail, wholly unsuspecting this view of the situation, laboured unceasingly to bring them back to the fold.

The Parson's sermons had no terrors for young Mr. Fiske as he sat by the door, heavily burdened, vainly seeking for guidance. When the light fell upon Angela's calm, proud features—(she never looked towards him now)—the interior of the church faded away. They were alone together in the buggy, and she no longer tried to jerk him out of it, but had gone back to the old familiar footing of friendship. Then, a preliminary gurgle from the harmonium awoke him from his day-dreams, and he slipped into the dusty road, well knowing that, a little lower

down, L'Oncle Brabette sat on the veranda, with hospitable invitations for him to stay to dinner.

Although still growing, young Mr. Fiske heroically refused these dinners, even when Celimé's plaintive eyes appealed to him not to trust to his own cooking. To make the struggle harder, he had all a lad's liking for sweets, and Celimé's pies were renowned throughout the length and breadth of the Ottawa Valley.

After Celimé's extraordinary behaviour, not even for fruit-pies could he visit L'Oncle Brabette, and listen to that jocund worthy's tales of the Indian days when the first settlers came to Four Corners, and always ploughed with loaded guns slung over their shoulders.

"Ah!" L'Oncle Brabette would reminiscently observe, as he blew a huge cloud of smoke from his ancient Indian pipe—a pipe fringed with a choice collection of scalps of all colours. "Good tam dat! Everybodee tak' heem gun 'cept one old Quakaire, who mak' to trust le bon Dieu, and de Indians shoot at 'em all de sam', bagosh. But dey nevaire mak' to shoot de old Quakaire, cos he mos' bes' man all round. Den, bimeby, de Quakaire he get scare, and buy a gun, so de Indians shoot heem dead, and tak' hees scalp, juss to teach heem bettaire; but he too dead to know w'at dey mean. Ah-h! Good tam dat!"



Old Man, with peculiar wisdom, refrained from too palpably dry-nursing Jim. He was ready to give advice when asked, but he did not obtrude it upon his young friend.

On this particular Sunday, however, Old Man was at the other end of the county, and young Mr. Fiske, feeling unusually lonely, turned into his neat little garden, gave the grey a friendly pat, and proceeded to cook his own dinner.

Every Sunday he had a clean table-cloth, with a jug of sunflowers for a centre-piece. On this occasion, the *pièce de resistance* consisted of his favourite hen, which had been kicked to death by the grey, when, in a moment of confidence, she had carelessly approached too near the ragged hoofs of that blood-thirsty misanthrope. She was a young hen, or she would have known better. Her sorrowful owner, as he took a third helping, felt that he was showing his appreciation of her past services, by giving her fitting burial.

When he put aside the remains of the hen, and went to the cupboard to get his pipe—he had long since given up cigarettes—young Mr. Fiske found an agreeable surprise awaiting him; for there, enveloped in a snowy napkin, was a delicate, dainty fruit-pie—a pie big enough to last an ordinary person three days.

He brought it out to the table, fetched a knife and spoon, and gloated over it; then, about to plunge into the flaky crust, hesitated, and pushed the pie away.

"It must be from Celimé," he said to himself. "It must be from Celimé. It's very kind of her, but I—I wish she wouldn't. 'Tisn't right to—to tempt a man to sell his birthright for a—a pie. I—I won't touch it. Not even the smallest bit of it."

Although he turned resolutely away, the hut seemed full of the all-pervading presence of pie. His stomach craved for pie; but Celimé had no right to send him pies, to take advantage of his weakness. No man—at least, a man who was anything of a man—ought to be wooed through his stomach. It was making a god of something entirely subsidiary to the main purposes of life.

But what a beautiful pie it was! He could understand now why men prayed to be delivered from temptation. Clearly, the only thing to do with it was to bury the pie. Of course, he must thank Celimé for it the next time they met, although it was an outrageous, an unconventional thing for her to come to the hut and tempt him with pie. Probably apple-pie—the first of the season—now that the

apples were just ripe. He would take the pie away and bury it.

As he lifted up the pie, it did not seem fair to Celimé to bury it—not in that way. There was a more congenial method; and putting aside all matters of conscience, he took it. When he began, he calculated that the pie, with proper care and economy, would last him for three days. When he pushed away the dish, he had eaten half that pie, and felt that Celimé ought to be forgiven all her impetuous shortcomings. True, she had taken advantage of his craving for something novel. But what would Old Man say when he heard the story, as hear it he must?

He put the remains of the pie carefully into the cupboard, and felt that he had made a meal fit for the gods. Then thrusting an old felt hat on the back of his head, wandered away into the Bush to commune with the animate and inanimate things he had gradually learned to find there.

The Bush never failed him. He loved it in all its varying moods, and it loved him, welcomed him in a thousand ways. Strange birds and beasts, quaint carven rocks and stones, stately cedar and resinous pine, dainty tamarack, lady birch, and drooping rock elm, all awaited him there. He carved Angela's

name in the soft bark of the birches, lay upon his back amid a miniature forest of maidenhair, and watched a gorgeous dragon-fly hover over his sunburned nose.

Presently the dragon-fly perched on it, and leisurely preened his gauzy wings—a mark of confidence which pleased Mr. Fiske, although the insect's wings tickled, and made him want to sneeze. He repressed the sneeze with an effort.

When the insect had flown away, criss-crossing in an aerial dance with hundreds of still more beautiful familiars, young Mr. Fiske rose reluctantly, and decided to have a swim. A few yards farther on was a lovely little glade, with a pool in the centre—"the pool of the dragons," as the children called this dainty haunt of the *libellulidæ*. All around the sides of the pool were dense patches of the black-stemmed maidenhair fern, like tiny, fronded palms. Palms? Yes, they were palms. He began to hum:

“ ‘ I know not where His islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air ;  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care.’ ”

He had heard Angela softly sing it one evening, as he crept up to the back of her boarding-house,



and she rocked on the veranda. Angela! Angela! Angela! Was it always to be Angela? Did she comprise the ending and beginning of things? Was his life bound up in hers fatally, hopelessly, only to be repaid with scorn, cold indifference, contempt, dislike? Angela! Angela! Angela! What right had she to make his life sadder still, to dim for him the glory of God's universe, because she loved him not? What right? Ah-h! How it hurt to be there alone in the beautiful Bush, and know that she was— Hist! What was that? Something white by the "dragon" pool?

Cautiously parting the dense cedar branches, Jim peered through them and saw Angela asleep by the side of the pool. There was a bunch of flowers close to her relaxed fingers. Her long eyelashes cast shadows on her rounded cheeks. She slept like a tired child, her lips smiling as if she dreamed of pleasant tidings. He let go the branches and knelt there, quivering with joy to think that he should see her thus.

Whilst he thus knelt, a terrible fear took possession of him. Was she asleep or dead? He looked again, Peeping Tom that he was, to reassure himself, and softly sighed: "Angela! Angela!"

Angela stirred, half-opened her eyes, gave a

satisfied little yawn which disclosed her white teeth, and went to sleep again. Peeping Tom, shivering, shaking with fright at his unauthorised intrusion on her maiden dreams, knew not what to do. Afraid to stir lest he should wake her, he could not rob his eyes of the dear delight of seeing her again, and once more parted the branches.

Rather than crush the maidenhair ferns around her, she had placed her light cloak under her head for a pillow. Red and yellow, blue and green, shimmering flies danced over the surface of the pool, the warm light of the afternoon sun showed her white throat's lovely curve. She was so near and yet so far, so remote, so inaccessible, so exquisitely beautiful. He sighed again: "Angela! Angela!"

At the sound of this involuntary sigh, Angela stirred once more—a movement which sent him cowering down behind the branches.

Presently he looked through the leafy screen, feasting his eyes upon her. His heart beat rapidly. He wanted to crawl to her feet, kiss the hem of her white frock, implore her not to look coldly on him, to remember his unhappiness, to be friends again. But even when he parted the boughs to come forth, he could not do it. She lay upon holy ground, a thousand invisible spirits of the air and the Bush

watched over her, surrounded her with an inviolate chain—the sanctity of sleep—that sleep so like death, and yet so akin to life. The mere presence of a man near her was an outrage, an unpardonable affront.

He drew back a few paces, saying to himself that she must never know, then crept cautiously round to the other side of the pool and gathered a huge armful of the delicate maidenhair fronds. Returning with equal caution, he parted the branches, deftly crept out of the shadow of the cedar, and, worming himself along the ground like an Indian, and fearfully holding his breath the while, strewed a green coverlet of maidenhair over Angela's fair form, leaving only her face uncovered. Backing under the tree again, he was about to tear himself from the spot, when he heard someone coming from the other side of the glade, and Dick Higginson appeared, following his dappled cow.

Roused by the tinkling cow-bell, Angela sat up in bewilderment. The cow, now that she had given her master all the trouble of coming to seek her, continued her homeward way, the melodious jangle of her bell growing fainter and fainter as she wandered on.

Angela looked down on the green coverlet and

smiled. She had not expected so much poetry from Mr. Dick Higginson.

"Why did you do that?"

"Must ha' bin that English loony," he said, grinning sheepishly. "Thought he'd kinder cover you up. Them flies might have bitten you."

He paused, looking down upon her, and all the evil in him suddenly surged to the surface. The girl had flouted him, made him appear a coward. He would humble her.

Angela, vaguely uneasy, picked up two or three fronds of the fern.

"It was a pity to destroy them," she said coldly. "Good afternoon!"

"Not so fast." He caught her wrist. "Old Man ain't here now."

"Well?" She drew it away. "I am not aware that that makes any difference, Mr. Higginson."

"You've got to eat humble-pie," he said sullenly, "or I'll kiss you."

"You—will—what?"

"Kiss you."

Her eyes flashed lightning. "Coward!"

"Maybe I am, and maybe I ain't; but I'm going to do it."

"I do not think so. God would not permit so



vile an outrage. Go home, and never dare to speak to me again."

"God!" he scoffed. "If there's a God above them tree-tops, let Him come down and help you. We're here—alone. Keep a civil tongue in your head, or it 'ill be the worse for you."

Angela's high courage did not quail. She even came a step nearer to him.

"Go!" she said briefly. "Go! As sure as there is a God in the heaven above us, He will punish you for this. Go!"

For answer, he clutched at her, thrust his arm round her slim waist, and tried to draw her to him.

The next moment there was a crash—he saw a thousand stars—dropped to the earth like a felled log. There may not have been much science in the blow, but young Mr. Fiske's muscles had hardened; he was as active as a panther, and his eyes shone with all the fierceness of that predatory animal.

"That is God's answer," said Angela serenely, gathering up her dainty white skirt. She turned to Jim.

"It is very kind of you, a stranger, to come to

my aid. Good afternoon!" And she disappeared beneath the leafy branches of the trees.

Mr. Dick Higginson sat up, only to find Jim leaning against the cedar trunk in an attitude of profound dejection.

"Say, you English loony, was it you hit me?"

"Hit you! Oh, I suppose so."

Mr. Higginson cordially extended his hand, as he got up and shook himself.

"Thought it was your old grey kickin' me. Say, there ain't no need to let on to Old Man 'bout this yer little misunderstandin'. He's nasty when he's riled, is Old Man."

Jim nodded.

"Old Man's tough—darned tough," observed Mr. Higginson, preparing to follow his cow. "I was only tryin' to frighten her. I'll fight you if you like."

Jim shook his head, and the other dizzily pulled himself together.

"'Taint no good," he said, with a sudden gust of passion. "She don't care a damn for neither of us; she's that cold and proud, the devil himself couldn't break her."

"Ye-es. She is cold and proud; and you and I are not fit to live in her presence. Go away."

"You won't fight me, or have a drink?"

"No, thanks!"

Left to himself, Jim pressed his hot forehead against the cool trunk of the tree, stupefied, dumb, wondering. How cruelly Angela hurt him every time! They were strangers. Yes, they were strangers!

The great, comforting Bush, the cool, silent Bush, the tender, healing Bush, wrapping him in its green arms, sheltering him, drawing the sting out of his pain, hushing his wild cries, taking him to her fragrant breast, teaching him to endure, to wait, to be patient, making him understand that the passion of man for maid is purified by grief, that all the dear treasures of a woman's heart must be won by loyal service, days of toil, nights of unrest, abnegation of self, the love which never falters, the hope which never fails, the faith which endures beyond the gates of death, beyond the passing of the years, beyond all accidents of time, of circumstance, and space!

Did she disdain him, he must bear her scorn; did she, unseeing, pass him by, he must thank God for seeing her; did she flout him, make a mock of him—all these things were but the proving and the shaping of his love; a love in which must

be no thought of self, but only care for her.

He knelt beside the little pool, kissed the ground where she had lain, and, once more taking heart, started homeward to bear the burdens of life.

The red-and-white cow lowed plaintively as he neared the hut, and the night paced slowly over a sky

“ . . . So still,  
As though an angel's wing  
Were hovering o'er the luminous  
Transfigured face of evening.”

But in his present depressed mood young Mr. Fiske had no eyes for

“The river shining to the stars,  
The green inwoven with the grey.”

It was beyond the poor bountiful beast's milking-time; her swollen udders proclaimed how much she suffered. Ought not his own pain to make him tender, merciful, considerate to the pain of all around him? Bruised in heart and spirit, he went into the hut to get his milking-stool, and there, upon the rough, deal table, lay a sprig of maidenhair!



Now he began to understand how Adam, revelling in the new-born world, yet all the while vaguely conscious of his own awful loneliness, must have watched a deeper beauty creep o'er Eden's face when the First Woman smiled.

## CHAPTER X

### JULIUS DREX

CONSTERNATION reigned in Four Corners. Miss Drex had resigned.

Four Cornerites, discussing the question on their verandas, did not know whether to be affronted or dismayed. For some time past they had been, as Deacon Dunn put it, "wallerin' in eddication," and felt a little tired of it. On the other hand, they were—men, women, and children, with a few exceptions—undeniably devoted to Angela, whose social influence was as great as her educational powers.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, someone had grievously offended the fair "school-marm," and Four Cornerites were inclined to regret the happy days gone by when it would have been possible to lynch the trustees, apologise to the teacher, and start afresh. Now that such drastic measures were no longer possible, they implored Old Man to get

them out of the difficulty. He might do anything, say anything, make any terms he thought fit, provided he could persuade Miss Drex to remain. Nothing was too good for one who in such a brief period had exerted so profound an influence upon the social life of the premier village of the Ottawa Valley.

Thus armed with the ample powers of a plenipotentiary, Old Man cautiously approached Miss Drex, whose reception of him appeared to be somewhat frigid and constrained. Old Man, taking it for granted that his friendship for young Mr. Fiske was at the bottom of her icy demeanour, gracefully conversed on local topics in his most engaging manner, quite regardless of the angry tap-tapping of a particularly pretty foot upon the veranda floor. He had purposely timed his visit when everyone took the air on the wharf. Consequently, Angela was alone.

It was a new sensation for Angela to find herself alone, and she resented it. She grew still angrier when Old Man, with every appearance of intense earnestness, held forth at great length on the striking dissimilarities in the M'Cabe twins—twins which had elected to make their appearance in Four Corners the previous week.

"Never mind about the M'Cabe twins; they're quite ordinary infants," said Angela, stopping him somewhat abruptly. "Old Man, I am going home."

"Goin' home?"

"Yes. I'm sick of the place, and the extraordinary people in it. Everybody seems to be more eccentric than everybody else. It's just as if they did it on purpose."

"Jusso," said Old Man, with prompt acquiescence—"jusso. You minds me of the time I was down to Kootenay, and got kinder homesick myself. Chinks and Digger Injuns ain't the liveliest folk to chum up with. Ever met any Chinks or Diggers?"

"Never; and I don't want to meet any."

"Well, well! I don't blame you. They ain't nice people to know—'specially in warm weather. Does their talkin' 'ithout speakin', so to speak. Sign talk mostly."

Angela got up.

"You didn't come here to talk about Chinese and Digger Indians, Old Man. I have been so grossly insulted that I am determined to leave the place."

"Meanin'?" queried Old Man, a dangerous light in his eyes, which had a trick of narrowing when he was angry.



Angela stopped her rapid promenading of the veranda, with a consciousness that the somewhat valueless life of Mr. Dick Higginson was in her hands. For a moment, she enjoyed the knowledge of that power. Then something in Old Man's steely gaze frightened her.

"Meanin'?" repeated Old Man, a second time, with quiet fury.

"Oh, nothing—nothing! I've said more than I meant to."

Old Man got up and shrugged his shoulders. The dangerous quietness in his voice would have deceived anyone but Angela.

"If you're goin' to say it's Jim, I can't believe even you; but it means I'll have to choose atween you," he said simply. "Course it ain't Jim. If a man said that to me!" He looked helplessly at her.

She ran to him, moved by his distress.

"No, no, no, Old Man! Of course it isn't Ji—Mr. Fiske. He is a—a Lancelot."

Old Man drew a long breath of relief.

"Don't call him names like that 'less you're obliged to, honey. I'm makin' a man of him, and it comes sorter rough on me to think you treat him wuss'n if he was a Digger. You don't

seem to understand he's a hard row to hoe, and he's hoein' it like a man. Him and his father allers chummed along together, and didn't want no one else. Father dies and leaves him—here. Jim fights it out—finds himself, so to speak. Juss as he's gittin' on and doin' me credit, you two wimmen come along and mix up everything. I don't blame him; you're both that pretty, you'd mix me up, though I'm a man of experience, and acquainted with wimmen gin'rally. You don't mean to be unkind to him?"

Angela, suddenly realising that she did not wish to be unkind to Jim, made a gesture of dissent.

"I'm easin' off the strain's much as I can," mournfully continued Old Man; "but other folks ain't. They takes a delight in pilin' it up; and he ain't seasoned timber yet, so to speak."

"I don't try to make things harder for him. They are quite hard enough for me too, without your being so cruelly unjust, Old Man. Didn't I come to you at once when that scene happened the other evening? Didn't I rush down with the clothes you lent me, only to make myself ridiculous?"

"You'd got much too pretty a colour to look ridik'lous, honey. 'Sides, you ain't brought them clothes back yet." Old Man refused to be appeased.

Angela was filled with remorse.

"Oh, forgive me, Old Man! You—you don't know what happened?"

"In my official capacity I ain't had no information, and I ain't had my clothes back, neither."

"I—I threw them into the bushes. I am so sorry. They must be there still."

"Oh, no, they ain't. You don't know Four Cornerites as well as I do. 'Taint every one as has got clothes like them," darkly suggested Old Man. "Ikey's tried to borry 'em time and agin for fun'ral; but I never could bring myself to let him have 'em. Leavin' 'em in the Bush like that 'ill take all the style out of my Sunday pants, 'specially if that 'puppy' gits hold of 'em. I ain't dum partik'lar, so to speak, but I draws the line at dogs of that kind. There's too much perfumery about 'em for my taste."

The girl went off into a peal of laughter, then came to him, put her hand in his.

"Now, Old Man, if you'll promise to forgive me, and not ask the name of the man who insulted me, I'll tell you everything you want to know."

Old Man nodded. He could not trust himself to speak.

"I'm so sorry I quite forgot all about your poor clothes," said the girl ruefully.

Then she stopped, as if about to say something extremely unpleasant.

"Better git it over," suggested Old Man.

Angela nodded, drew up a low stool, and sat down, leaning her head against Old Man's arm. Old Man, suddenly becoming intensely interested in the first rising star, looked straight ahead.

"You've been just like a father to me," she said gratefully, "making the best of all my whims and ill-temper, and getting me out of one trouble after another. There are very few things I could keep from you, Old Man; but I am Julius Drex's great-granddaughter, and—and as proud as he was."

Old Man let fall his corn-cob pipe. This child Julius Drex's great-granddaughter! The great-granddaughter of the White Chief, the lord of untold gold and marble quarries, the master of all the things for which men fight and strive and struggle and slay one another! Lord of all save one thing—that one thing, lacking which a man's life is dust and ashes—the love of a good woman.

The girl drew a long breath.

"You are more wonderful every time I talk to



you, Old Man. So you know all about Julius Drex?"

"I knows a good deal. No man ever knows everything about another man, any more'n a woman knows everything about any other woman, 'specially when the other woman's made a clean breast of it." Old Man gently stroked her silky hair as she leaned confidingly against him. "P'raps you can tell me the rest of his story."

The girl took a yellow, rumpled piece of paper from her breast, and smoothed it out with loving care. The creases of it had been mended, the edges were frayed and ragged.

"I wouldn't tell anyone else," she said softly. "Now that all my own people are dead, and I am the last of my race, I should like you to know the story. You have heard some of it?"

Old Man nodded abstractedly. The star had disappeared. In its stead, he saw a marble tomb. Upon a marble seat within it were huddled together the bones of a huge skeleton. At the skeleton's feet, as if piled there in derision, lay nuggets of gold. They covered the fleshless feet, glittered dully when the light of his lantern fell upon them. A little stream of water trickled through this death-chamber, huge black bats hung from the marble roof of it.

A rifle rusted amid the heaped-up gold. There, Julius Drex had awaited the coming of death ; there, his bones still remained. And the beautiful girl at Old Man's side was his sole lineal descendant, the heiress to all this fabulous wealth.

"He was a great man," said Angela dreamily, "and a very unhappy one. After the death of his wife, and when he was well on towards middle age, he loved a woman who cared only for gold, who mocked at his love, and married another man for money. When my great-grandfather reproached her, she admitted that she worshipped him, but that she loved money more. If at any time Julius Drex could shower gold at her feet in such sums as would make her husband's wealth seem but a dribble, she would return his love, and—"

"Sorter rough on him," sympathetically murmured her listener. "Sorter rough on both men. There ain't no trubbles or joys in the world but what a woman's at the bottom of 'em."

"Julius Drex, loving her madly, agreed to this unholy pact, disappeared from Montreal, was never seen again. From time to time, rumours reached her that he had discovered some region, the very stones of which were golden nuggets. Men he had known mysteriously disappeared for years, then returned to

Montreal rolling in riches. Their story was always the same, although no man believed them: They had been to the States and worked at their callings until they had amassed wealth. But they never went back to the States."

"And the woman?" queried Old Man. "The woman as loved gold more'n Julius Drex?"

The girl shivered.

"Ah, that was terrible! Her husband died ten years after Julius Drex disappeared. Then she waited—waited—waited until she began to find out that it was Julius she really loved, and not gold. And—"

"And?"

"He never came back to her. He never came. She waited—waited always, repenting in sackcloth and ashes; but he never came. When she died, she seemed to be talking to him, to see him once more."

"And this yer paper?" Old Man took it gently from her.

"It has been handed down to us one by one for the last seventy years. It was delivered to my grandfather by an Indian who disappeared and could not be traced. There was a curse on any person who should open the outer envelope before only one child remained of the house of Drex. My

father died last year. Before his death, he gave me the envelope, and told me to keep it intact until he was dead. I did so. A week ago—I had long forgotten all about it—I came across the letter among some family papers, and read it.”

“Knowin’ what sort of a man he was, I can guess what’s in it,” said Old Man.

The girl gazed dreamily out into the starlight.

“It told the story of his love. He went forth into the wilderness, achieved his heart’s desire, found fabulous quantities of gold, was about to claim the woman according to their infamous pact. He got rid of his companions after building himself a dwelling of pure marble to house his impure love, and was about to bid her come to him when, as he put the finishing touches to his work, he suddenly heard a voice: ‘Here hast thou lived, here shalt thou die—alone! Time shall be given thee. Repent!’ And so—”

“And so?”

“And so, to reclaim the woman’s soul and his own, he kept silence, lived the life of a hermit, shunned his fellows, spent his days in penitence and prayer. He had tempted the woman to lose her soul; he was to live the rest of his days surrounded by the useless gold. To save her soul,



he died a holy man, allowing his secret to perish with him."

"Why did he leave the paper, then?" not unnaturally demanded Old Man. "He must have wanted someone to know about it."

"Don't you see?" the girl said wistfully. "He could not rest in peace until he had confessed. His was a great love, but a sinful one."

"He was a great man. And he ain't the first man neither as has lost his soul for a woman's sake."

"But he did not lose it," the girl said eagerly. "He found it after all the sorrow of the weary years. It was the hand of God which led him to that lonely valley, which taught him really to love, which made him see that a passion base in itself drags the soul down to hell. He wrote this letter as a warning to the last of his race; he was able to see that we should die out. I feel, somehow, that I am near the spot where he died." She rose to her feet, and stood looking excitedly at Old Man. "I have never thought again of that paper from the time my father gave it me until the other day, when something whispered to me to open it and learn the story of Julius Drex."

"And now that you have learned, what are you goin' to do about it?"

"What can I do?"

## The Marble City

Old Man gazed with troubled eyes into the distance. Chance had made him the repository of Julius Drex's secret. Angela loved him. What was he to do?

"I tell you the story," the girl whispered, "because you are an honourable man, and I can trust you as I would my own father; I tell you because you have the power of understanding my heart better than I do myself; I tell you because"—even in the gloom he could see the rising colour in her cheeks—"I tell you because—" She faltered.

Old Man faced her gravely.

"I want you not to mention this to a soul for the next three months," he said earnestly. "It'll take me all that time to make up my mind what to do about it."

"But how shall I keep in touch with you?" she asked disappointedly. "It is a long way from here to Montreal. I must earn my bread in the meantime."

"I never said it wasn't a long way," retorted Old Man, with a twitch in the corners of his mouth. "Aren't you earnin' your bread here?"

"But of course I'm going. You know how impossible it is for me to remain here."

"We'll talk that over this day three months."

"I won't be treated as a child. I tell you, Old Man, I will go!"

Old Man spoke very gently.

"You ain't the first woman in the world as couldn't wait awhile for happiness, and then waited in vain the rest of her days."

"What do you mean?"

"I was sorter thinkin' of Julius Drex. If the woman he loved had waited a bit to find out whether he was really more to her than gold, she might have married him some day."

"But her love of gold—"

"Gold! There's plenty of gold in the world, only people looks for it in the wrong places."

"In the wrong places? Where should they look for it, Old Man?"

"In a woman's heart. That's where most of it's to be found, if people only had the sense to look for it there. D'you think I dunno? D'you think I ain't seen happiness wrecked for want of a little patience? I'm gittin' on in years, and you're juss beginnin', so to speak; but I know what I'm talkin' about, and you don't."

"Yes, Old Man! Yes!"

"There's one thing in the world as really counts; and it only comes to the real man or woman once

## The Marble City

in a lifetime. We may fight and kick agin' it, and deny it to ourselves, and make believe it ain't there—but it's a lie. It's got us tight in its grip, and holds us tight, and till God A'mighty loosens that grip there ain't nothin' in life but dust and ashes, and miserableness and pain. You take God's word for it, child, and not the word of a sinful man, and hug your secret tight, and be lovin' and kind, and bear other folks' burdens as you'd have 'em bear yours."

"Yes, Old Man, yes! What then?"

"Then, in God's own time, and not a second afore you've made yourself worthy of it, long as it may seem to you, you'll know what it is to feel the grief and the pain and the longin' slip from your heart in the everlastin' peace, the everlastin' joy, the everlastin' sweetness of seein' only one man in the world, and hearin' God's voice speakin' to you through him."

"Oh-h! You hurt me! You hurt me!" She burst into tears.

"I—I'm kinder sorry, child—kinder real sorry. I didn't mean to make you cry; but you seem playin' at life with your pretty airs and graces, and I'm afeard for you—I'm afeard. Sometimes when we hurts those as cares for us, they goes away and dies



of it. Then, when it's too late, when nothin' 'ill bring 'em back agin, we wish we'd died too."

The girl clung to him, weeping softly. Old Man put his arm round her, and soothed her as if she were a terrified child.

"I — I'm afraid," she whispered softly. "Life frightens me."

A canoe danced merrily out of the shadows into the moonlight.

"Out of the darkness into the light," said Old Man, pointing to the canoe. "Some folks stays in the shadder all their days."

Angela knew the canoe and its occupant. So did Old Man. He left her gazing after the fairy cockleshell as it floated swiftly past.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SECRET

"THIS time," said Mr. Dick Higginson, surveying the wretched Melon Seeds, as she blinked and cowered over the stove, and warmed her fleshless hands at the glowing flame—"this time, I reckon, I'll go one better 'n Old Man. Old Man may be very well in his way, but 'tain't my way. If he ever finds out I tried to kiss the school-marm, there won't be much thinkin' power left in me, I reckon. Yes, take him by and large, I'd rather have him for a friend than an enemy.

"But there's no denyin' he's kinder stuck-up. Stuck-up! Thinks what he don't know ain't worth knowin', does Old Man. Calls himself a Christian, too. Maybe he is—for Four Corners; we've our own partik'lar breed of everything here, and our Christians might git mistook for sinners if they were to travel elsewhere. But I let that pass. Still, there's no denyin' when a man's a Christian he does

git a bit uppish. 'Cause he can't git drunk, he won't let nobody else. Must go meddlin' with 'em, and tellin' of 'em to repent. Spite, I calls it—spite!

"'Twould be a kind of Christian duty to take the starch out of Old Man, and show him sorter careless and easy as people he reckons to be dum fools can find a gold mine under his Christian nose where he can't. If he didn't turn it up so often at men just as good as he is, he'd git along a heap better. Have another drink, Melon Seeds, afore we start!"

The gibbering creature warming her wrinkled hands before the fire drew a tattered blanket more closely round her, and with a furtive glance about the hut—a glance full of dull fear—stretched out her skinny claw for the insidious poison.

Mr. Dick Higginson, as he handed Melon Seeds the whisky bottle, surveyed her with increased satisfaction.

"You ain't, strictly speakin', real han'sum, but I reckon, in rough figgers, you're a-worth a million dollars to me. A mil-li-on dollars! And last time I asked him, Old Man wouldn't lend me five."

He took the half-empty bottle away from the old squaw.

"Gently, you heap of misery! Gently! You're the last of the lot, ain't you?"

Melon Seeds nodded her head, and eagerly eyed the bottle.

"Where's your brave?" demanded Mr. Higginson suspiciously. "Dead?"

Melon Seeds nodded again. Then with brief yet energetic pantomimic action, depicted the manner of Injun Joe's sudden taking off.

Mr. Higginson shifted his chair back a yard, and eyed her with renewed distrust.

"Come to think of it, I wouldn't trust myself alone in the Bush with you for a good deal. Not if you had a knife."

The squaw made no rejoinder. Her bloodshot, beady black eyes stared at the flames as if she saw the phantom of Injun Joe. From time to time she coughed, and again cowered over the fire.

Mr. Higginson took a nugget of gold from his pocket, and carefully poured some acid over it.

"Just to make sure it ain't no put-up job," he remarked apologetically to the shivering wreck by the fire. "Once I bought a feller's land 'cause he said he'd found phosphates on it. Then I sent his samples down to Montreal to be analysed, and the analyst said they were gneiss. Durned nice, I call it, to be took in that way. You're sure there's



lots more where this came from?" He held up the nugget to the light.

The squaw nodded, then turned again to gibber at the flames.

Mr. Higginson went to the door and looked into the darkness. The perfumed gloom was much pleasanter than the reeking atmosphere of the hut. After vainly endeavouring to get Melon Seeds to start for the mine, he had kindled a fire to warm the shaking old wreck who had sought him out with her nugget and expressive tale of the thousands of others of similar size known to her alone. As soon as Mr. Higginson realised the meaning of her story, he decided that delays were dangerous. If he wanted to profit by it, he must get her away from the vicinity of Four Corners before his fellow-citizens heard anything about the gold. Should she fall into Old Man's hands, that astute official would speedily worm the story out of her.

Mr. Higginson would not have minded going shares with most people; but he did strenuously object to dividing the treasure with Old Man. Whenever they met, he experienced a sneaking consciousness that if Old Man were to know of the insult to the school-mistress, his shrift would be short. Besides, supplying Indians with "liquor" was a crime

punishable by imprisonment without the option of a fine.

Mr. Higginson decided to get the gold as soon as possible, leave Melon Seeds enough whisky to drink herself into the Happy Hunting Grounds, and then to "put out" for the States. In imagination a costly diamond stud already glittered upon his ample chest. He dreamed a brief dream of the wholly material delights of New York, then went round to the back of his hut, and cautiously returned with a couple of horses.

One of them had a small keg of whisky fastened to the saddle. Mr. Higginson surveyed it regretfully.

"To think," he said—"to think of that being wasted on an Injun!"

He brought his own horse to the door of the hut, and laid a couple of big flour sacks across the saddle.

"I'll leave her there with the whisky," he said. "Two sacks will be a heavy load for one horse."

He saw himself riding through the Bush, the golden treasure beside him, and chuckled again at the thought of Old Man's discomfiture when the story leaked out.

But it was time to start. Fortunately, there was no moon, and his hut was on the outskirts of the

village. He went in, and roughly shook Melon Seeds by the shoulder. The squaw's apathetic glance was still fixed on the flames, as if fascinated by what she saw in their glowing light. A helpless horror chained her to the spot.

"Come along!" said Mr. Higginson anxiously. "It's time we started."

Seeing that the old woman did not move, Mr. Higginson lost patience, and shook her more vigorously than before. Melon Seeds, suddenly awakening to realities, with a wild screech launched herself at his throat.

Mr. Higginson beat her off with difficulty, for her nails were more like the claws of a wild beast than a human being. He was ruefully conscious that she had scratched him severely. At length he managed to secure her wrists, and shook her until her few remaining teeth rattled. This drastic measure partially restored Melon Seeds' wandering wits. She looked at him in surprise, seized the bottle from the table as soon as he let go her hands, and took another drink.

"Heap hot," she said, fondling her puckered stomach, as if to indicate the course which the fiery liquid had taken.

"Dessay it is," declared the aggrieved Mr.

Higginson, "but I've had enough of this yer foolishness. Either you come along with me, or git. I'm not goin' to be torn to bits by an old carcajou like you. The horses are outside. Are you ready?"

Reason momentarily returned to the decrepit old squaw. Solitude, fatigue, exposure, semi-starvation, had done their work, and she was very near the end of her tether. She drew her ragged blanket more closely around her, motioned to Mr. Higginson to lead the way, and slipped the whisky bottle into some mysterious receptacle about her person.

"All right, you can have it if you behave yourself," said Mr. Higginson. "I've tied a keg of it to your horse."

He helped her into the saddle, which she mounted astride like a man, and, after tying a rope round her waist, gave the horse a cut with the whip.

The sweet fresh air partially dissipated the disorder of Melon Seeds' fuddled brain. She turned her horse's head towards the Bush, and, leaving the reins free, guided him with her feet.

Although the night was pitch dark, it made no difference to Melon Seeds; for every Indian squaw can find her way about in the dark as though it were noonday. Mr. Higginson, following behind, went to



sleep, and at intervals woke up again to jerk the rope tied round the old squaw's waist. After jogging steadily on for some hours, she halted in a little glade, and getting off her horse, lay down upon the ground with a fatigued grunt.

Mr. Higginson, forced to follow, or relinquish the end of the rope which he had tied round his own waist, also dismounted, and stood blaming himself severely for not marking the way they had come. He was cramped, cross, tired, and felt in Melon Seeds' blanket for the whisky bottle. He found the bottle, but there was nothing in it.

Mr. Higginson dropped the bottle with an exclamation of disgust.

"That's what comes of doing good to Injuns," he murmured, and gave the prostrate squaw a slight kick.

Melon Seeds grunted again, but did not stir. She had been drinking steadily all through this silent ride, and nothing short of an earthquake would have roused her.

Mr. Higginson ruefully sat down. In his anxiety to get the old squaw to start, he had forgotten to bring any food with him, and the journey had made him hungry. Besides, it was that chilly hour before the dawn which nips a man to the bone. He

## The Marble City

regretted that he was not an Indian. Indians can go without food for an indefinite period; a white man's powers of endurance are limited. Mr. Higginson was cold, hungry, athirst; even the thought of the gold to which he was journeying could not mitigate his sense of physical discomfort.

Tightening the rope round his waist until it nearly bisected his body, he leaned back against a tree, and fell into an uneasy slumber—a slumber which was occasionally broken by the neighing of his horse in answer to some other quadruped, the stertorous snores of his companion, and the rustling footsteps of the unseen denizens of the Bush.

When Mr. Higginson awoke, he found himself in a little glade where,

“As day came dancing over the sky,  
She smiled the whole of the way,  
And Earth felt the smiles creep over her face,  
And then laughed back at the Day.”

Both horses stood grazing hard by, their steady munch-munch of the short, sweet grass showing how much they enjoyed it. Where was Melon Seeds? Where? Then he remembered that she was beside him.

He yawned.

"Gosh, but I'm hungry! Could eat a wolf. Hi! Melon Seeds! Wake up! You've had a long sleep."

He untied the rope from his waist, and leaning over towards the form on the ground, gave it a flick.

"I was a fool to let her have all that whisky," he muttered, again stretching out his arms. "I was a— What's that?"

"That" was the barrel of Old Man's rifle steadily pointing towards him. Old Man, leaning against the mule, surveyed him with a sardonic smile.

"Mornin'," he said affably—"mornin', Higginson!"

"W-what's the matter? What's the meanin' of this yer foolishness, Old Man?"

Old Man pointed to the prostrate Melon Seeds.

"Git a good look at her, and you'll find out."

"I don't want to look at a painted old heathen like her unless I've a mind to. Quit this fool—"

"Look!" thundered Old Man. "Look, or I'll blow your head off."

Mr. Higginson hastily pulled aside the squaw's blanket from her wrinkled face. The dirty brown had changed to a dull leaden colour; her lips were leaden too.

"Dead! Old Man, she ain't dead?"

"Deader 'n a door-nail. Now, dig a hole and bury her."

"Ain't got no tools," sulkily began Mr. Higginson.

Old Man threw him a spade, and motioned to a green spot beside a graceful birch.

Mr. Higginson threw off his coat, and reluctantly began to dig a shallow grave. The exercise made him hungrier than ever, set his blood flowing freely, supplied his cramped limbs.

As soon as the grave was deep enough, Old Man, putting aside his rifle, fetched the sacks from the horse, laid one in it, and motioned Mr. Higginson to take the dead squaw's feet. Then he lifted Melon Seeds by her limp shoulders and laid her to rest. Opening the folds of her blanket, he placed fragrant trailing arbutus and fronds of fern over the wrinkled old face, drew it closely together again, put the other sack on top, and standing bareheaded at the foot of the grave, motioned to Mr. Higginson to take the other end.

Mr. Higginson unwillingly obeyed.

"It's only a drunken old Injun, and I'm darned hungry. Let's cover her up soon as possible, and go and git suthin' to eat, Old Man. 'Tain't as if she was a Christian."



"P'raps it's better for her she ain't. I'm goin' to give her a send off, any way."

Old Man knelt down with uncovered head. At a sign from him, Mr. Higginson knelt also.

"O Lord," prayed Old Man, gazing skyward through the delicate tracery of the birches, "Giver of life and death to all of us, look down upon this yer poor creature Thou hast made, the last of her tribe, deserlate, forlorn, 'ithout a friend in the wide, wide world. It ain't for us, O Lord, to say as she ain't had no chance. But, O Lord, we beseech Thee to forgive what we have done to her, defilin' Thy handiwork, a - leadin' her into temptation, makin' a mock and a sport of her mis'ry. Thou knowest, O Lord, she ain't had no show. Therefore we pray Thee to take her into that land where white and black and brown are all alike in Thy sight. Take her out of the darkness into the light, comfort her for all the sorrows of livin', give her the grace denied her on earth; and when her poor body crumbles away, and the mem'ry of her tribe passes away too, lay not up agin' her oppressors the iniquities they have wrought. Wretched was her life, wretched was her death; and the hills, and the plains, and the valleys knows her no more. But Thou knowest her, O Lord; Thou knowest how she never had a chance,

whiles we, her oppressors, have walked in darkness. When it comes to evenin' up things, deal mercifully with us, O Lord, and not accordin' to our deserts; for we can't make much of a show, and Thou knowest it. But trustin' to Thy goodness, Thy compassion, we lays this poor squaw to rest in the sunlight, with the green trees wavin' overhead, the river murmurin' to her on its seaward way, the birds singin' to her, the cedars and pines and hemlocks watchin' over her, till Thou bidd'st her rise agin. And furthermore and finally, O Lord, we would beseech Thee to cleanse our hearts of the lust for gold, to teach us to be merciful, and compassionate, and pitiful one to another, and to forgive us our trespasses agin' this poor creature of Thine as we forgive them as trespass agin' us. Amen."

Mr. Higginson dolorously echoed Old Man's "Amen," and rose from the grave-side. Old Man, taking the spade, gently shovelled in the earth, and held out his hand.

Mr. Higginson shook it somewhat dubiously.

"'Twas in my mind as I follered you through the darkness," said Old Man simply, "to put a bullet into you. You know why?"

"I—I—"

"But," said Old Man, "when I come up with you,

and found as that poor old squaw was dead and had took her secret with her, I 'lowed you'd fallen into temptation. Now, swear never to try to find out the truth of the squaw's story, and I'll forgit what you did t'other Sunday. You've bin nearer death this last day or two than you'll ever know or wish to know."

Mr. Higginson tremblingly swore by all he held sacred that he would never renew his quest.

"I give Injun Joe whisky to git his secret out of him," said Old Man, "and so I can't blame you. But I did it for the sake of Four Corners, not for my own. Now you go home and act honest, and do a little work."

Mr. Higginson flushed a dusky red.

"I—I ain't afeard of you, Old Man, but I'm ashamed of the school-marm business. How'm I to find my way out?"

"We're just a mile above Baskerville," said Old Man. "The road's t'other side of the ridge by the river there. You've bin goin' round and round half the night."

They gravely shook hands again, while the sweet winds whispered among the trees. After Mr. Higginson had gone, Old Man fashioned a rough cross and placed it at the foot of the grave.

"If settlers comes along, they'll think she was white, and let her rest," he said to the mule; then wandered away into the forest depths, her huge head hanging over his shoulder.



## CHAPTER XII

### "THE PILGRIM OF PAIN"

TIRED with the arduous labour of developing the young ideas of juvenile Four Cornerites, Angela dismissed her small pupils, and lingered momentarily until the last pitter-patter of footsteps on the gravel outside told her that she was alone. When the day's work was done, she always went into the little committee room at the back of the school-house, for a reason which was perfectly patent to herself, although it puzzled the children.

As she stood at the window there, she could see the pearl-grey smoke from young Mr. Fiske's chimney curling gracefully skyward. For a man, he was singularly methodical in the regularity with which he prepared his customary combined tea and supper. Angela smiled involuntarily at the thought of his miserable *ménage*, the untidy way in which a mere man conducts his own housekeeping when he has no woman to do it for him. Perhaps even now that

habitant minx who was always throwing herself at his head yearned to go down to the hut and put it in order.

Angela bit her lower lip fiercely, and, with a toss of her pretty head, finally adjusted a particularly becoming hat in the cracked mirror generously provided by the trustees for her especial use.

Hiding the great key of the schoolroom door under the steps, and putting up a dainty sunshade, she prepared to take a brief stroll in the Bush before supper-time. She was thinner and paler than of yore, and yearned for the balsamic odour of the pines, the cool breeze from the river, the pleasant softness of the springy turf along the road leading down to the Judge's.

The tell-tale column of smoke made her certain that she would not meet young Mr. Fiske. Besides, she knew all his movements, and cleverly regulated her own thereby, so that they never chanced to encounter one another. Just now, she feared the awkward results of such a meeting, for the infatuated young man would probably demand an explanation concerning the coming of that spray of maidenhair into his hut.

Angela's cheeks burned hotly at the mere remembrance of it. Why had she put it there? She knew

very well why she had put it there. Still, she did not want Jim to know also. It was ridiculous to think that because Old Man approved of him, everyone else must necessarily follow in the footsteps of that arbitrary tyrant. Had it not been for the latter, she would have returned to Montreal to mix with more congenial associates—associates who had not degenerated into tillers of the earth.

But in Montreal she could not enjoy this magnificent freedom of river and earth and sky, this pure, sweet air, the grateful shade of the drooping rock elms on the outskirts of the Bush, the soothing silences, the long colonnades of pines, with the sunlight glinting redly down upon them, the great boulders tossed carelessly about, as though playthings left over from old Titanic days. No, Montreal would be insupportable just now. She shuddered to think of the heat and the dust and the noise, and strolling onward, vainly endeavoured to forget all about young Mr. Fiske, his newly-developed fighting powers, his uncontrollable predilection for her society.

Presently a herd of cows, straggling slowly back to Four Corners, halted to stare at her with mild inquiry. She shooed away an inquisitive heifer with her sunshade, and patted the cool, moist nostrils of a calf.

She was not the girl to faint at the sight of a cow, or shriek if a chipmunk ran by her.

Congratulating herself on her bravery, she continued onward, wondering how the cows could reconcile it to their self-respect to move in so lethargic a fashion. The long dusty road stretched away behind her to Four Corners. In front of her was the entrance to a green tunnel, formed by the arching branches of the rock elms. This magnificent natural avenue continued for nearly half a mile. Angela had never before realised how completely it shut out the sunlight. She stopped to gaze down its leafy depths, and amuse herself by guessing what would first come into it.

For fully five minutes she stood languidly waiting, glad of an excuse to do nothing. Then a figure at the end of the tunnel gradually grew larger and larger. When it came within a hundred yards of the place where she stood watching, she could see that it was a limping old man, with a bundle slung over his shoulder. His ragged beard and hair were snow-white; one bare foot bled from a cut. He carried his shoes in the pocket of the loose linen duster which he wore, and, with his flying locks and flowing garb, looked like a bewildered prophet of old who had slept for a thousand years, only to awaken



to unfamiliar surroundings. From time to time he halted irresolutely, murmuring to himself. The staff upon which he leaned broke in two, and nearly precipitated him to the ground. Leaving the fragments where they lay, he reeled onward, scarcely able to move from sheer weariness and pain.

At first he did not perceive Angela, who drew aside to let him pass, thinking him to be some poor habitant pilgrim journeying for his soul's sake. As she did so, the poor old man kicked his hurt foot against a stone and moaned.

“I can't go any farther,” he said pitifully. “I can't go any farther.”

Although Angela had an impatient way with young men, she could be very tender with old ones. In an instant she was by the pilgrim's side, leading him to a mossy bank.

“Sit down and rest,” she said gently. “You are tired. See, your foot is bleeding.”

“My foot bleeds ; so does my heart,” moaned the old man, sitting down and surveying her with mild, moist eyes, from which the light of reason had wholly fled.

“Mad !” thought Angela, with a thrill of pity for him. Then aloud : “Stay a moment until the pain passes. Are you a stranger here ?”

## The Marble City

"I am the Pilgrim of Pain," said the old man, in tremulous tones. "The Pilgrim of Pain; and I wander over the earth. You won't tell them I'm here? If you won't, I'll write you a cheque on the spot."

He laid a detaining hand upon her sleeve. She noticed that it was finely formed, though trembling with age or grief.

"Of course not. They will never dream of looking for you here. I am going to get some water to wash the dust out of that cut. Then it will not smart so much."

"You will come back?" the poor old man doubtfully entreated her. "You will come back? He went away, and he never came back. Sometimes, I think I told him not to." In his anxiety he held her fast. "Besides, you must have the cheque. I've brought it for you all the way from England."

Angela gently disengaged herself from his frightened clasp.

"Yes, yes. Of course I will come back. Rest here, with your back against this tree and your feet on the cool moss. There's a spring yonder. I want to dip my handkerchief in it."

She dipped her handkerchief in the spring water, came back to him, and washed the cut. Then she

tore the handkerchief in two, and bound it round the injured foot.

“That will keep the dust out. Doesn’t it feel better now? How far are you going? Isn’t your journey nearly ended?”

“I don’t know,” said the old man confidentially. “I don’t know, my dear. I am on my way to Canada.”

“Yes, yes; but you are here. This is Canada.”

“Such a big place; and there aren’t any streets I know in it,” said the old man pitifully. “You can’t tell me where to find him?”

“No,” said Angela kindly. “Not just yet. Perhaps I may be able to help you later. Try to understand me, now your foot doesn’t hurt so much. Where are you going?”

“I think, my dear,” said the old man drowsily—“I really think, if these horrible flies were not so troublesome, I could go to sleep. I went to sleep last night.”

“Yes, yes. Try to tell me where you went to sleep last night, and where you expect to sleep to-night.”

“I don’t remember,” said the old man sadly. “I don’t remember, my dear; but strange things came round me—things with large eyes—and I was afraid.

There were trees, too. I lay under one, and talked with the stars that looked through. In the morning, some good people gave me bread and milk, and wanted me to stay with them, but I told them—I told them—” He looked round in a bewildered fashion. “That’s all,” he said helplessly. “Then I gave them a cheque. It pleased them very much when I told them how valuable it was.”

“Can’t you remember what else you told them?”

“I think not, my dear. They said they would send for someone to take care of me, so, when they had gone out to the fields, I came away. You don’t think they’ll be angry? It was a very big cheque—thousands of pounds.”

“Angry! No, of course not. If you could only remember where you wanted to go, it would help us, wouldn’t it? Can’t you try?”

“No, my dear.” The old man gazed at her helplessly. “It’s no use trying; it hurts my head. That’s what I said when they wrote it down for me.”

“Wrote what down?” eagerly asked Angela, feeling strangely drawn towards this beautiful-faced old man, with his mild blue eyes and apostle-like features. “Did you put it in your pocket?”

“Yes,” he said tiredly. “I really think, my dear,



I must have put it in my pocket. And when you put things in your pockets, they don't like to come out again. Besides, I can't remember which pocket.”

“Try them all,” anxiously suggested Angela.

He tried them all, and at length fished out a crumpled piece of paper with “Four Corners” written on it.

“Ah!” Angela began to understand. “You are coming to Four Corners?”

“Yes, my dear. The four corners of the earth; but they never stand still—any of them. When I get to one, he isn't there, and I have my trouble for nothing. You don't know how many cheques I've given to people, but all in vain. It's about time for our game of billiards, too,” he added irrelevantly.

“Billiards! Are you an Englishman?”

“No, my dear, I am a wanderer—the Pilgrim of Pain. I really think, if you don't mind, I should like to go to sleep. You'll prevent people from coming after me?”

“But I assure you there aren't any people.”

The old man shook his head obstinately.

“You don't know them, my dear,” he said, in a terrified whisper. “They say I owe them money; they will put me in prison. Then I remembered my boy, and came to find him.”

"But you are very tired and hungry. Do you think you could walk as far as the village if you leaned upon my arm?"

She looked back at the distant village, and knew that he could not walk there. Besides, what could she do with him in the village? Though the poor old man was quite harmless, the children would frighten the life out of him.

A brilliant inspiration came to her. Young Mr. Fiske was very lonely. She would take the old man to him, and pay for his board and lodging until he grew better. The preoccupation induced by attending to the old man's needs would prevent young Mr. Fiske from dwelling upon a subject which it was not good for him to dwell upon.

A sudden colour flushed Angela's pale cheek. Under cover of this charitable object, she could delicately convey to young Mr. Fiske that, provided he behaved himself in future, and made no inquiries about the sprig of maidenhair, his iniquities might perhaps be condoned.

The old man laid his hand nervously upon her arm.

"You won't let them touch me?"

"Of course I won't. You are coming with me," she said cheerily. Even then the truth did not strike

her. "You are coming with me. There is a friend of mine who is very strong, and brave, and gentle, and, if I ask him, he will prevent people from annoying you."

She was surprised to find herself dilating so enthusiastically on young Mr. Fiske's merits to this mad old man.

"But you'll stay too?" said the old man, rising with difficulty. "You won't leave me? Do you know," he added confidentially, "I was so very tired, and I have come such a long, long way, that I began to think I should never get to him. He must be waiting."

"Yes," she said, supporting his footsteps with tender care, "he must be waiting. Now, step upon the soft moss, and lean on me. Nobody shall hurt you."

The old man smiled upon her. His frightened eyes lost their wild expression.

"You're very kind. Sometimes"—he put his hand to his head with a bewildered gesture—"sometimes, do you know, I really think I must be a little mad. They said I'd had a shock. A shock! I—I got squeezed over some mines. You remember those mines?"

Angela did not remember them, but she did know

vaguely the financial meaning of being "squeezed." She felt conscious of a strange sympathy and pity for this friendless old man, a wanderer in a strange land, and guided his limping steps with tender care. He was a big man, although very thin.

When they left the roadway behind them, and took the mossy lane leading towards young Mr. Fiske's hut, he seemed relieved.

"Now we're safe, my dear. Now we're safe," he said happily. "Do you know, as I stood at the other end of that long tunnel of trees, I was so weary and footsore that I prayed to God to give me a sign to guide me; and then I saw you standing there, with the sunlight shining on you, and at first I thought you had come straight down from the sky. But you are real, aren't you? You'll let me give you a little cheque?"

Angela assured him that she was real, and that she would much rather not have a cheque. She wanted to get him to the hut, for every bone in her slim body ached with supporting his weight. She had no fear of him now. The present physical strain prevented her from thinking about the strangeness of this old man's coming to Four Corners. In a few days, he would doubtless partially recover his memory, and be able to tell her who he was.



She motioned him to sit down on a log in the garden, and knocked timidly at the half-open door.

Young Mr. Fiske, his shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbow, and a frying-pan in his hand, answered Angela's knock. When he saw who it was, he dropped the frying-pan upon the floor.

Angela motioned him to pick it up.

“You don't seem glad to see me,” she said, with some asperity. “Will you have the goodness to put aside that absurd frying-pan and let me come in?”

“I—I beg your pardon! I—I was so astonished.” Regardless of consequences, he threw the frying-pan, contents and all, into a corner. “I'm so glad to see you, Miss Drex—it's so awfully good of you to come in.”

Angela smiled.

“I'm glad you think so; but I'm not coming in until I've been properly invited.”

“Properly invited! Ah! If I'd only known you'd been waiting for that, you wouldn't have had to wait long.” He drew forward his one chair, dusted it with the tablecloth, and stood shyly before Angela, waiting for her to speak. “You can't tell how happy it makes me to see you here. If I'd only known you were coming, I'd have cleaned up a bit—got some flowers—wash—”

She motioned him to be silent.

"It isn't Sunday that you should make such trying preparations in my honour. Of course, you're very much occupied. And I—I haven't come to talk about things. I have come to ask you to do me a favour—a very great favour. It is a—a most unusual thing for a girl to come here in so unconventional a way, although my—my first visit was equally unconventional. But then you were not at home. Will you grant me the favour I ask?"

"Why, of course! You might know You needn't ask me to do anything. It's done without your asking. I'd fly up to the sky if you wanted me to."

"I—I—of course I don't want you to go away as far as that. Besides, you couldn't do it. It's silly to talk in so—so exaggerated a way. I came to tell you that there's a poor old mad countryman of yours I want you to take in and shelter for a little while."

"Mad, is he? Oh, well, that doesn't matter. Of course I'll take him in. I rather like mad people. I'll keep him for the rest of his life if you wish it."

She stopped the glowing, impetuous youth, but very gently.

"You understand that I am to be responsible for the—the cost of maintaining him."

He drew himself up, chilled and insulted.

“Ah, you haven’t forgiven me. You can’t humble yourself to receive the smallest act of kindness from me, when I’d—”

“When you would do what?” She was smiling very sweetly now. “When you would do what, Mr. Fiske? Listen to my apology—how silly and ungracious I have been to you! Though I am quite ready to apologise for my stupidity, you must admit that appearances were greatly against you, and—and—” She floundered hopelessly, but her eyes spoke more eloquently than words.

“Appearances against me! Of course they were. They always are. They were black enough to hang me. They’d satisfy anyone—anyone. You were absolutely right—absolutely! Where is this old man? Why didn’t you bring him in? I’ll be a father to him. As if it were necessary to ask whether you could bring anyone here. Of course you can. Why don’t you bring him right in? You—you have forgiven me, haven’t you? You don’t know how it has kept me awake at nights, how I’ve longed—”

Angela gave a little cry of surprise.

“Who—who’s that?” she asked, pointing to the photograph hanging on the wall, the one relic left to young Mr. Fiske of the prosperous past. In

her excitement, she did not even notice that the fateful sprig of maidenhair was tucked into a corner of the frame. "Who—who's that?"

The young man, yearning to hear her sweet forgiveness for crimes he had never committed, turned impatiently to follow the direction of her outstretched forefinger.

"That! It's my father," he said sadly, and leaned against the wall with a sudden pang. "The—the dearest old dad in the world; but—but he left me—suddenly. See what a beautiful, clear-cut old face he has! He told me to stay in Canada, or I'd have gone home to find out about his last moments before the madness came upon him, and he—he killed himself."

"Killed himself!" she said, in a thrilling whisper. "Killed himself! Oh-h! And I have been so cruel to you."

"Yes; he thought he'd disgrace me if he lived. Lost all his money, and—and—"

"I am so sorry—so very, very sorry. I did not mean to pain you."

"Oh, never mind now. I—I'm sorry too. I didn't mean to make—such an ass of myself. Seeing you unnerved me. Perhaps you'll add to your goodness, your sweet sympathy, by telling me—"



He came eagerly towards her, with outstretched hands. As he did so, something happened which made him forget even Angela.

“I think, my dear”—the old man put his white head in at the door—“I think, my dear, if you will allow me, I will come in and rest. I—I could give the gentleman a cheque for his hospitality.”

At the sound of the old man’s voice, Jim started, then leaned back against the wall with distended eyes, putting his hands in front of him as if to ward off a ghost.

Angela, mid-way between father and son, suddenly realised the truth.

“It’s—it’s your father come to find you!” she cried. “Don’t you know him again?”

Jim took the old man in his arms.

“Dad! dad! dad! Not dead! not dead! Is it really you, dad? Come back from the grave! Come back from the grave!”

The old man gently disengaged himself.

“‘Dad.’ Someone used to call me that once,” he said, with a puzzled air; “but I don’t know you. I’m looking for—looking for—I’m looking for my son; but, of course, if you would like a little cheque, I shall be most happy—most happy.”

Angela laid her hand on Jim’s arm.

"Don't grieve! Don't grieve! He was dead and is alive again. Have patience, he will recover. But he has come a long way, and is very tired."

The old man looked at Angela pitifully.

"This gentleman seems very kind," he said. "Very kind." His eyes fell on the photograph, and he clutched Jim by the throat. "That was my son's," he said fiercely. "Where is my son? What have you done with my son? Give me back my son."

Jim pulled himself together with an effort, although he was trembling in every limb, as he gently loosened the old man's grip.

"Yes, yes, dad. That's all right. You didn't know me at first."

"I—I beg your pardon," said the old man feebly. "Does my son live here?"

"Yes," said Angela eagerly, "he lives here. That is why he left the photograph on the wall to welcome you. If you wait here long enough, he will come back."

The old man got up and took her hand.

"He will come back? God will send him back to me?"

"Yes. God will send him back to you."

"And you will come back too?" His trembling

fingers held her gown. “You will come back? His mother said she would come back, but she went away, and—and— You will come back? If a little cheque would be of any service to you, I have thousands—thousands.”

Angela gently led him to the rough couch, took a tumbler of warm milk and made him drink it, at the same time motioning Jim to pick up his frying-pan and cook something.

In a dream, the lad obeyed her; in a dream, he watched her feed the old man. When the latter had finished eating, he lay back on the rough couch. A few minutes later, he fell into a troubled slumber.

They stood looking at him—at his travel-stained clothes—his wounded foot—his sad, patient, suffering face.

“He doesn’t know me! He doesn’t know me!” groaned the young fellow.

“Patience, patience!” whispered Angela, and bending over the old man, softly kissed his furrowed brow.

The old man slept on, still clasping her hand. Holding his other hand, the bewildered lad gazed across the narrow couch at Angela.

“See,” she said softly, “how vainly we strive and

vex ourselves, and are but little children in God's hand. Your father has come back to you."

"He—doesn't—know me! He doesn't—know me!"

"Patience," said Angela, "patience!" And softly went away, leaving them together.



## CHAPTER XIII

### ANGELA EXPERIMENTS

YOUNG Mr. Fiske was very much astonished at the manner in which his father "chummed up" with the grey horse. For once, the erratic animal paid his new friend the respect due to age. The Pilgrim evidently preferred the grey to any other animal on the place; cows did not interest him in the least. He grew fond of Old Man, too, but was a little afraid of the mule, and always spoke of his son as "The Gentleman." Angela he invariably addressed as "my dear."

A week after his arrival he began to take a keen though somewhat disjointed interest in Canadian life. Once or twice he tried to explain the manner of his coming to Four Corners, but was too incoherent to convey any impression about it, save that he had landed in Montreal with his slip of paper. Under Old Man's fostering care, however, Four Corners soon ceased to have any terrors for him.

## The Marble City

When Old Man had clipped the Pilgrim's flowing locks to a decent length, borrowed a suit of the Parson's clothes, and given him a pair of comfortably-padded moccasins, so that he might not feel the pressure of a hard shoe on his wounded foot, the Pilgrim lost his tired look. The trouble in his face was simply that of someone trying to recollect.

Old Man took him to visit all the local notabilities, and dexterously headed off any inconvenient questions, the Pilgrim, gravely courteous, looking on the while. Old Man, with customary thoughtfulness, had previously explained to his friends that the stranger was a celebrated English financier who was suffering from mental trouble in consequence of gigantic operations on the Stock Exchange. All he needed was rest and quiet, and hearing from his son of the unique character of Four Cornerites generally, he had decided to stay among them for a time and see that son "grow up with the country."

Naturally, the flattered Four Cornerites received the Pilgrim with a deference which they would not have paid to a successful millionaire.

"The hand of God bein' on him, so to speak, for tryin' to corner things," said Old Man, addressing his friends generally, "'tain't likely I'm goin' to stand

by and see the hand of man interferin' when God's cornered him. Any man as is searchin' for trouble, sorter pinin' for it, has only to tread on the Pilgrim's corns to git it; but I should ha' thought when the Pilgrim looks round and says to himself: 'I might go and stay with them Carbery hogs, but they ain't Four Cornerites, the friends of my son' — why, I should ha' thought that made him a Four Cornerite right away."

This dexterous allusion to the "Carbery hogs" settled the question. In a short time, the Pilgrim became an object of individual pride and care to every one at Four Corners. There was a certain childishness about him which pleased the children; he played games with them; and they all taught him things which he forgot five minutes afterwards, although he tried hard to remember. He learned to smoke a corn-cob pipe with the grave dignity befitting an "ancient," and was so harmless that people accepted him as a public institution which would fill the "Carbery hogs" with unavailing envy, especially as the Pilgrim had passed through Carbery on his devious way to Four Corners, and had not received at the hands of its officials that public recognition which was his undoubted due.

## The Marble City

As soon as he overcame the first anguish of finding himself a stranger to his own father, Jim fussed round the Pilgrim like a hen with one chicken. The delight of being no longer alone was almost overpowering. At first, before he went up to the office in the morning, he left the old gentleman to take care of the stock, and explained that he was not to feed them.

The Pilgrim listened with pleased attention, but directly Jim's back was turned, fed the stock to bursting point. When his son returned at mid-day, he pointed out the suffering animals with great glee. Jim at once hitched up the grey and drove off to Old Man, who spent that night with the stock, and ministered unto them.

Seeing the absolute futility of making the Pilgrim understand the harm he had done, Jim put a padlock on the barn, and always carried the key. For so young a man, he developed a surprising patience, when, with the very best intentions of pleasing The Gentleman, the Pilgrim nearly worried the life out of him.

Although Jim had hoped to make a little money by his farming operations, the Pilgrim effectually dissipated this hope, for, at the instigation of the grey, he let the cows into the maize, pulled up the



cabbages for his equine favourite, and did a hundred and one little things which took Jim the rest of the day to put right when he reached home in the afternoon. Old Man, whose eagle eye saw everything, at length wormed the truth out of Jim, and instantly saddled himself with this new responsibility.

Half of Old Man's time was spent in travelling round the country in an area of nearly twenty miles. On every possible occasion he took the Pilgrim with him, and the latter, feeling that Old Man was a tower of strength and a refuge from the vague sorrows which oppressed him, accompanied the Sheriff of Four Corners with great glee. When the troubled Jim hinted to Old Man that these expeditions cost money, Old Man, lying with that perfect naturalness which is the refinement of true art, declared that every tavern-keeper in the county aspired to the honour of entertaining the Pilgrim, whose reputation had gone abroad in a marvellous manner.

"You set to work pilin' up the dollars, sonny," said Old Man; "and don't you worry about the Pilgrim. He's real level-headed, the Pilgrim is, if he could only remember things; and the way to make him remember is just to tote him round till

he gits strong and hearty. He's beautiful manners, has the Pilgrim — most as good as the Parson's. Why, when I has to levy on a place, they're so tickled with him they take it lyin' down. Many a scrap the Pilgrim's saved me from 'ithout knowin' it. Last time I was up to Pendleville, Jim Bass was layin' for me ahind the barn with a pitchfork, a-sayin' things about what he was goin' to do to my innards with it I wouldn't disgrace myself by repeatin' ; but when he see the Pilgrim, he thought he was a bishop, and repented him at the 'leventh hour.

“ ‘Put up your carnal weapon,’ says the Pilgrim, with that pleasant smile of his. ‘It might frighten Mr. Evans, who is a man of peace. Perhaps you will allow me to present you with a little cheque which will straighten out the difficulty.’

“ I tell you, sir, Jim Bass was so tickled with that thousand pound cheque of the Pilgrim's that he put his pitchfork right away, and paid off the execution like a man. No, no ; you let me tote the Pilgrim round, and he'll save me money. Why, I could get five hundred dollars for him any day from them Carbery fellows, if so be you was minded to part from him.”

The Pilgrim also developed a habit of going into stores to buy things for Angela's pupils, mildly telling

the storekeepers to charge them to The Gentleman. As these sums were very small, the storekeepers either supplied him gratis, or vaguely promised to send the toys. This quite satisfied the Pilgrim and pleased the storekeepers. When Jim got an inkling of the matter, they also lied heroically, and assured him that he was mistaken.

But in the joy of being no longer alone, the lad soon forgot these petty vexations. After a time, he gave up worrying himself about his father's loss of memory. The Pilgrim was happy. Beyond a vague trouble in his blue eyes when he strove to recall the past, he had not the shadow of a care. It had all slipped away from him. Occasionally he asked for his son, but was quite content to accept Old Man's assurance that he would soon see him. It was as if the healing waters of Time had washed away his troubles.

He took a great delight in escorting Angela to and from the school-house. At first she could not keep him away from it, but at length he grew to understand that he might sit on the steps until the children came out. Then he would offer Angela his arm, and punctiliously escort her back to her boarding-house, greatly to the satisfaction of the proprietor, who

considered that the Pilgrim added "tone" to his establishment.

Fortunately, the Pilgrim drank nothing but water, or genial Four Cornerites would have insisted on his "painting the town red," an artistic pursuit which generally caused its followers to awake inside the gaol next morning.

In addition to his other troubles, young Mr. Fiske was puzzled by Angela's attitude with regard to his somewhat timid overtures. Imagining that once his innocence concerning Celimé was established, there would be an end of the matter, he was astounded to find that it still haunted people's memories with a persistency which was extremely annoying. Angela, moreover, while perfectly friendly, and extremely solicitous as to the Pilgrim's welfare, did not appear to take any special interest in young Mr. Fiske—a course of conduct which, when he had time to think about anything, reduced him to a condition of frenzied despair.

Old Man, seeing this, smiled grimly. As a man of the world, he knew that this outward indifference had an inner significance which young Mr. Fiske was too inexperienced to understand. Acting on this assumption, he spoke somewhat coldly of young Mr. Fiske one day, and noticed that



Angela turned away from him with an indignant flush.

"Don't matter who plays the game," he said to himself, "it's allers the same :

" ' A runnin' away and a follerin' after,  
A little tear and a little laughter,  
A blush and a kiss and a golden ring,  
And that's the beginnin' of everything.' "

After which poetical rhapsody, he strolled into the Bush with the mule in order to think ; and when Old Man and the mule went off together for purposes of meditation, not even Ikey dared follow them.

One evening the Pilgrim received a formal invitation to lend the lustre of his presence to a festal gathering in Four Corners. Jim brought him up in the buggy, then took the grey horse round to L'Oncle Brabette's shed, and left him there. On turning to quit the shed, he could see the Pilgrim comfortably established upon his host's veranda, with a fan in one hand and a glass of lemonade in the other, as he talked to Angela in his puzzled, disjointed, irrelevant kind of way.

The young man looked at them enviously.

" Ah ! if one could only forget. He seems to have come to the end of everything, and doesn't even

## The Marble City

know me ; all he cares about is to have a good time with Old Man and Miss Drex. I thought at first, when he came back to me, I shouldn't be any longer alone ; but I'm worse off than ever. Ah, well, perhaps it's something in myself. I haven't got licked into shape. What an ungrateful beast I am to envy him ! Some day he'll know me again, and then things will mend."

He halted irresolutely in the sweet summer night, filled with an unreasoning sadness—that sadness which comes like a call from the wild, tempting us to throw off the shackles of civilisation, to plunge into the heart of the primeval Bush, to live a primitive life apart from our fellows. But he did not really want to live apart from his fellows. It was this separation from one or two of them which made him so unhappy.

He stood for a moment, leaning idly against the top of the wharf, his vague discontent fed and ministered to by the sweet beauty of the summer night. There were the thin, clear, vibrant calls from the whip-poor-wills, the lap-lap of the river against the wooden piers, the shrilling of frogs, chuckle of loons, fairy lamps of interlacing fire-flies, the melancholy whoo-oo-hoo, whoo-oo-hoo-oo of a passing owl. No ; he would not go back to the

house until it was time to fetch the Pilgrim. He scorned to thrust his society upon Angela if she did not want him, and strolled down the long wooden wharf, idly noticing that the holes in it were big enough to break a horse's leg.

Here and there, happy lovers had interlooped their initials on the side railings, with artistic lovers' knots beneath. To the left shone the Point camp-fires—camp-fires of a few nomad Indians who dragged out a miserable existence by selling baskets and beadwork. Immediately facing him rose the tall, soft, confused outlines of the Laurentian Mountains on the other side of the river, clad with rounded maples, and suggesting immeasurable depths wherein the children of the wild roamed and ravened at large. Away to the right, nearly half a mile down, the white foam of the rapids faintly caught the eye.

The roar of the water rushing over the rocks was lessened by the distance ; it whispered to young Mr. Fiske's tired ears as he sat down on a stump at the end of the wharf, and mechanically noted the gleaming lights of the saw mill opposite. A few green islands nestled softly upon the river's breast. In the star-spangled gloom they looked like dusky swans. From the marshy inlet running down to the

shore came the booming of bull-frogs, the occasional bark of a dog, the lowing of a cow searching for her wandering calf in the rocky pastures on the verge of the Bush.

The young man sat down, his chin resting on his hands.

"It's a hard fight—a hard fight," he repeated drearily. "Seems, as they say here, I've 'bitten off more than I can chew.' They'll be having a dance presently." He shivered with rage to think of anyone else dancing with Angela. "My! How many million years ago is it since I had a dance, since I was a light-hearted lad without a care in the world?"

He drew out his pipe, then put it back again; it seemed a sin to profane the sweet air with the odour of cheap tobacco.

"To think," he mused, still more drearily—"to think I'm sitting here all alone, and the dear old dad's up there looking as wise as Solomon in all his glory, and not understanding a single thing they say to him, not knowing me, getting used to the idea of never seeing me again. It worries a fellow. Have I to get used to being alone all my life? Here I've been grieving over dad, breaking my heart about him, and he's as happy as a little child."



He smiled sadly.

“Well, and I ought to thank God for it. Isn’t it better to see him as he is than having him blow out his brains because he thought he’d disgrace me? Isn’t it better to have people take to him and make a fuss over him, though his mind has gone? Why can’t I take my medicine like a man?”

He knew that he could not “take his medicine like a man” because he wanted Angela to give it to him, and she, apparently, did not care to do so.

“Selfish brute I am,” he confided to the rippling water. “Just think of wanting her to share my hut some day. Her! Why, her proper place is a ball-room, in a dainty gown, with jewels at her lovely throat, flowers upon her breast. It would be an injustice to her to make her think that—”

As the gathering gloom enfolded the old wharf with its dark shadows, a white figure stood in the centre of the lower storey, where the passengers disembarked from the boat. The figure came slowly up the steps, and stood before him in silence.

He had no need to ask who it was. Angela must have followed him down to the wharf. The subtle perfume which floated from her to him, the soft rustle of her dress, the thrill which filled his being—all these told him that Angela stood before him.

## The Marble City

He jumped up, but she motioned to him to sit down again.

"What are you doing here?"

"What am I do— Oh, dreaming! Just dreaming! That's all. I thought you were still on the veranda."

"Dreaming! Is this a time to dream?"

"Well, yes; I have put in about fourteen hours' hard work to-day, and so—"

"And so?"

"I came down here."

"Why here?" She looked at him intently.

Somehow, she seemed a being from another world, not real flesh and blood, but a phantom of delight, which would disappear beneath the swiftly-rising moon.

"It's restful—soothing. Here one can forget things."

"Forget!" The concentrated scorn in her tone hurt him. "Forget! At your age! If you begin by forgetting now, you will have nothing to remember when you are old. Youth is the time to create memories, not to forget them."

He looked up at her steadily, but there was no kindness in the eyes which searched his.

"Yes, I want to forget things. Though I'm a hard

worker, I'm a dreamer, too ; and I've been dreaming impossible things. When the dream gets too hard for me to bear, I come down here, and the mountains and the river and the moonlight take away the sting of it."

"The sting! You are succeeding in your—your pastoral way?"

He spoke very quietly. "Oh, yes. You don't think I'm complaining?"

"N-no."

"I've had heaps more luck than I deserve."

"And yet?"

"And yet I'm a child crying for the moon, the stars, something to sweeten my life and make it full of gladness. I'm ashamed of myself, could kick myself when I think of the kindness of people here, their absolute goodness to me."

"You seem to have acquiesced in it very quietly."

"At one time what you say would have hurt me ; but it doesn't now, because I know it is true."

"But," she said impetuously, "are you going to be always like this—sink down to the level of a mere farmer, never aspire to higher things?"

"Aspiration means sorrow. I have aspired to the highest thing of all, and it is bringing me nothing but sorrow—nothing but pain. Oh, the pain, the

bitterness of it! Day after day, night after night, I say to myself: 'This thing *has* to stop.' But it won't stop; it masters me, compels me to do things of which I am ashamed."

"Ashamed!"

"Yes—ashamed. The flutter of a dress, the momentary glimpse of—"

"Celimé? Why don't you go to L'Oncle Brabette and woo her. Everyone knows you have only to ask her."

He drew a deep breath. Angela, knowing his secret as she must know it, could jest with him thus at poor Celimé's expense—Celimé, who had been good to everybody all the days of her sweet, brief life. He would be less than a man not to resent it—even from her.

"Thank you," he said quietly. "Little as I know about women, it is always a woman who hurts her sister woman."

"Hurt! Oh, you do me an injustice. I thought that I should be giving you pleasure in making the suggestion."

"Why? Why did you think so? What right have you to think so?"

"What right? The right of my own eyes."

He was very angry at this ungenerous attack on



poor Celimé; still more angry to find that Angela's jealousy made her hard and cruel.

"Others are more charitable. For your kindness to my father, I thank you; for having added a bitter sweetness to my own life, I also thank you. But you can't expect me to thank you for believing me to be either a scoundrel or a vain ass. Celimé is good and pure and kind and sweet; she—"

"Oh, if you expect me to stay here to listen to a complete list of her virtues, and contrast them with my own demerits, I—"

"I do not expect you. You and she are very different. She is kind and gentle and pitiful. You are cold and haughty and proud; and yet I—"

"Thank you. You were going to add?"

"Nothing." He made way for her to pass, but she did not move.

"Then why are you angry with me?"

"Angry! I am angry with you because you hurt me—hurt me as even my father's supposed death failed to do. And it never stops hurting—never stops. Day-time and star-time it's you—you—you—always you! And you are as cold as the moon-beams on the water there. It pleases you to think how you hurt me. Pleases you!"

Angela smiled somewhat sadly.

"Pleases—me! It is the surest way to cure you. You are only an unformed lad. You cry for the moon. Now the moon is everything to you. See how cold she is, the chill radiance of her light! If the moon were placed in your hands, you would tire of her, and cry for the stars. Come down to earth; seek something less ethereal. I have long wanted to tell you this."

"Why?"

"Because I am going away from here soon. And," she smiled a little sadly, "it might become a habit with you to long for the moon. The things we do not get are always those we long for most. If I were to begin dreaming, I—I might not be able to stop. I will not have sorrow claim me yet. I want to live—live—live, see the world, measure myself against it, not dream of—love! And so I am going away. The world calls me. I must go."

"You are going away! Go-ing away!"

"Yes; directly I receive Old Man's permission. Do you know of anyone in Four Corners who dares to do anything without Old Man's permission? I am so tired of this life," she added, with a sudden passion. "It wounds my pride; it hurts me, too, to see these people claim you as their own, to see you

become one of them, when you might be so different. You hurt me too. You will never know how much you hurt me."

He faced her helplessly. This was a glimpse of the real Angela.

"I—hurt—you!"

"Yes, you do; and I am angry with myself for it. I despise myself."

"You despise yourself!"

"Yes, despise myself."

She came nearer to him.

"When my father died, I lost everything—position, pride of place, friends. Now I am a 'school-marm.' I have lost caste. I am no one. I am shut out from the world."

"You—you value these things?"

"Yes, I value these things. They make my real happiness. Love is a transient dream, a fable invented by the poets round which to weave their foolish fancies. I will not love! I will not love!"

"And," he spoke very slowly, "you want to go away where you will meet someone to give you the things of the world."

"Of course I know the vulgarity of it all," she said hopelessly. "It's so miserably mean and sordid, but—"

"It is because of your ignorance."

"My ignorance! How dare you!"

"Yes, your ignorance. It is because you don't know how a great love can transform everything, how it sweetens and glorifies this world of pain; brings heaven to earth, changes its flints to flowers. Some day you will wake and know, and—weep."

"Love! Love! What do you know of that boy-and-girl dream which fades away before the realities of life?" She looked at him searchingly.

"It is the one thing God gives us to enable us to bear everything else," said the boy, with strange new wisdom, looking his idol in the face. "The one thing! The one thing! The one thing which teaches us the beauty of holiness, the holiness of beauty. You're tired and overworked; you've lost heart; you don't really mean what you say; you close your ears to God's voice because you fear to give your heart and soul to another's keeping. You want to be all in all to yourself, and you can't—you can't—you can't! None of us can. You don't know what you are doing. You couldn't give me the happiness you've given me if you really meant what you were saying."

"But I do mean it." She was helpless, amazed at the sudden sternness of his voice.



"You do not. You don't know."

"If I don't know," she said helplessly, "who is to teach me?"

"I will teach you."

"You!" She appeared to be amused at the bare possibility. "You are only a presumptuous boy."

"I was a presumptuous boy once, but I am not now. Suffering has made a man of me. I don't know how I'm going to do it; but I love you with all my heart and soul, and I'm going to make you love me. I'll not cringe and crouch to you, tremble before you. That's all wrong—I see it now—all wrong. The gift I bring you isn't one to hide, to be ashamed of; it's the key of life. You're not the woman to be won by a sneaking, trembling submission. If necessary, I'll fight you, subdue you. Some day, as sure as we stand here alone in God's world, with God's stars shining down upon us, I'll claim you—keep you for my own. I know it; I feel it; it's here. I can't explain; don't know how I have the courage to tell you this. But when one's heart is as sorrowful as mine is, when everything in the world depends upon one woman in it, I'm not going to lose my grip, take up the broken fragments of life, and pretend to be thankful."

## The Marble City

"Oh-h-h! This is monstrous! That you should dare! Are you mad?"

"Mad! No; I love you. That is my madness, if madness it be."

"And when did you make this startling discovery?"

She tried to be contemptuous, but her voice shook.

"It's the truth. That's all I know about it. Perhaps I should have said it more gently; I could not have said it with more reverence, more love, more worship. For some reason, you are trying to make me disbelieve in you, and you can't do it. Nothing can make me disbelieve in you. Nothing!"

"They all used to say that," she murmured, a little wearily. "They were men; you are only a boy."

"Am I any the worse for that—less pure—less truthful? Do I love you less truly because you're dearer to me than life itself? Can't you see you're sunlight, moonlight, starlight to me; the winds, the whispering waters; sweeter than the flowers, lovelier than the loveliest thing the world holds, the holiest joy beneath God's sky? And yet you come to me trying to belittle yourself, trying to shake my faith in you. It is incredible that the devil should put so black a thing into your heart. Out upon you! I won't have it!"

Angela, her lips slightly parted, breathing hurriedly, came a step nearer to him. She had tried to frighten the boy out of his love for her, and she was frightened herself. It was so far-reaching a thing; its roots twined round her heart, making a child of her. These were brave words of his. He would compel her love. Her love! He had compelled it, but he should not know. This youthful audacity must be repressed. With negligent intention, she let the handkerchief which she had been twisting in her fingers drop to the floor of the wharf.

"Pick it up," she said. "It is time we ended this nonsense. You are moonstruck."

The lad responded to her inmost thought. He seized the handkerchief, pressed it to his lips again and again, thrust it into his breast, clasped his hands tightly over it, as if the contact healed his pain.

"You forget yourself," she said imperiously. "Give it to me!" and would have hated him for evermore had he done so.

"When you give yourself to me also—not before," he cried fiercely; and Angela, with sham haughtiness, glided slowly away through the moonlight, feeling that she had met her master.

Left alone, young Mr. Fiske's knees trembled beneath him. He leaned against the rough wharf,

wondering what had happened to him, what inspired madness had seized upon him. Should he run after Angela, beseech her pardon for his rough words? A soft, sad little sigh at his elbow woke him from his delirium.

“M’sieu Jeem! M’sieu Jeem!”

He turned with a start. “Celimé! What are you doing here?”

She was very white; her great eyes glistened sadly in the moonlight.

“M’sieu Jeem, I am malade, and I am com’ here to mak’ forget heem.”

“God forgive me, Celimé! You are ill! You haven’t thought me unkind for not coming to see you, dear? Let me take you back to L’Oncle Brabette’s. You might get a chill so close to the water. You—you’re not angry with me, Celimé? We’ve always been such true, good friends—always. I’d never forgive myself if I thought I’d hurt you in any way.”

She smiled wearily up at him in the moonlight.

“M’sieu Jeem! M’sieu Jeem! Strong M’sieu Jeem! Somet’ing have break.” She laid her hand upon her heart. “Sometam I t’ink it have break.”

“No, no, Celimé.” In his sorrow for her, he scarcely knew what he was saying. “You mustn’t



talk like that. Now, I'll just wrap my coat round you. There! that's better. You—you can't think how much I enjoyed that pie. It was a—a stupendous pie. I didn't leave a crumb of it—not one solitary, single crumb, Celimé. It was the best pie I've ever tasted. And you've never yet told me how you contrived to put it in the cupboard. You're always so good, so kind. How did you manage it? Now, tell me. It was clever of you. It was just like that kind heart of yours, always thinking of others, and never of yourself."

"Ah, M'sieu Jeem," she smiled happily. "You lak' dat pie? You did eet heem all?"

"Like it! Why, I ate every bit of it, Celimé—every bit. Didn't leave a crumb; and when it was finished, I could have begun all over again. Now, don't cough like that, dear. Take my scarf."

He hastily tied it round her slender throat, she trembling with the exquisite happiness of this momentary contact, although the moonlight made her white face whiter still.

"Ah, M'sieu Jeem, eet was good, eh?"

"Good, Celimé! Why, it was magnificent. You mustn't stay here any longer, though, or you'll make yourself ill—really ill, you know. If—if I've ever seemed unkind to you, Celimé, you won't think I

meant it, will you? When I remember your happy laugh (before I saw you, I always thought that you must be pretty or you could not laugh so prettily), the way you used to dance about the house, and sing to me, what a ray of sunshine you were, I—why, I hardly know this poor, pale, serious little Celimé, with her sad eyes. Sing to me, Celimé. I'm very unhappy to-night, dear. Sing something bright and happy, cheerful and gay."

Celimé shook her head, her fingers still resting in his, as he made room for her beside him.

"Ah, M'sieu Jeem, I have forgot all de ga chansons. I have forgot."

"Oh, no! That's impossible, Celimé; impossible. They will all come back to you if you think for a moment. Now try, there's a good girl. Make me forget all the things that are worrying me. Try."

"Ah, no, M'sieu Jeem, I cannot. All I can t'ink of is de shadow song, and eet ees not gai. Mon Dieu! eet ees not gai."

"Well, the water's full of shadows to-night, Celimé. I'll hum it when I catch the air. That's it! I knew you could do it when you once made a start. Now then!"

Celimé obediently nodded, and, still clasping his strong hand in hers, began to sing:

“‘Where de long shadows fall,  
Where de wind’s voices call  
Softly and low,—  
Moder earth cover me !  
Daisies grow over me !  
Bury me low.’”

“No, no, Celimé, not that. That’s very mournful indeed. I can’t catch the air ; it sounds like a dirge.”

She shook her head sadly—oh, so sadly!—and nestled more closely to him :

“‘Wild are earth’s hopes and vain,  
Even love touches pain,—  
Bury me low !  
Moder earth cover me !  
Daisies grow over me !  
Bury me low !’”

“No, no, little girl. Why, that is worse than before. Something gay and—and—light-hearted.”

“Ah, M’sieu Jeem, I cannot mak’ heem com’ to-night. You know ‘Gentle Breat’?”

“No, Celimé. Never heard of it before. Just try that, and then I’ll take you back to L’Oncle Brabette.”

“Eef I sing you ‘Gentle Breat’, you t’ink of dat some tam, eh?”

“Yes, dear, of course I’ll think of it. You’ve the sweetest voice in Four Corners. Now, pull the coat tighter and make yourself comfy.”

## The Marble City

He fastened it more tightly round her, and Celimé's sad little voice once more uprose through the chill moonlight :

“ ‘Gentle Breat’ goes singin’, goes singin’ troo de grass,  
All de flowers know her, and love to see her pass.  
All de flowers know her, and well dey know de song  
Gentle Breat’ goes singin’, goes singin’ all day long.

O Gentle Breat’ ! O Gentle Breat’ !

Dey do not know !

Dey do not know !

You sing—you sing of Deat’ .’ ”

“ Celimé ! Why, child, that’s worse than the other. Try the ‘Three Jolly Strangers of Trois Rivières.’ ”

She shook her head, and nestled closely to him, as if inexpressibly happy. He sighed to see how thin and white her upturned face had grown, and a chill fear gripped his heart. Years afterwards, he heard her sad little voice breathing almost inaudibly in his ear :

“ ‘O promise sweet !—I hear eet !—de fallin’ of de rain !  
De leaves once more shall rustle, de flowers come again !  
De flowers come again, wit’ deir faces fresh and sweet,  
And all de grass shall tremble ’neath de touches of your feet.

For you will come, O Gentle Breat’ !

And sing again,

And sing again,

And sing again—your—song—of—Deat’ !’ ”



She broke down with a sob.

"M'sieu Jeem! M'sieu Jeem! I am w'at you call verree sillee girl, but I cannot sing to-night—I cannot sing." She began to cough again.

"You poor little overwrought thing! We must stop this, Celimé. I'm going to tell L'Oncle Brabette to get the doctor to you. We can't have you ill, and sorrowful, and sad. Sometime, when you feel better, you will sing me an old French song. Not a sad one, all about Death. I shall be very unhappy. Celimé, if you don't grow more like yourself again, Now, I'll sing you a song :

"The shadows fall, the night comes sweet and clear,  
The rushes softly whisper, "My love, my love is near."  
The—'

Ah, it's no good, Celimé. I'm too husky. Somehow, I can't sing either."

They went slowly up the wharf in silence, the girl leaning against him from time to time, he striving not to let her see how much he wanted to take her in his arms, kiss her tears away, and comfort her. Better be cruel now than kind. Some day she would forget her passing fancy, laugh at it, and tell him what a little goose she had been. But as she

trembled to him, and laid one thin hand on his arm, he knew that she would not forget.

"Good-night," she smiled. "M'sieu Jeem, good-night."

"Good-night, dear — good-night. We are friends again, aren't we?"

She nodded, as if not daring to trust herself to speak, and climbed up the veranda steps, her sad little voice coming back to him :

" ' And sing again, and sing again,  
And—sing—again—your—song—of—Deat' ! ' "

"Ah ! Verree good song, mais tres melancolique." L'Oncle Brabette woke up on the veranda, and beamed upon Jim. "Bon soir, M'sieu Feesk. Bon soir. Nom de pipe, but I have spark de gals myself on de wharf. Eet stop, but dey all gone — all gone !" He yawned and stretched himself luxuriously.

"Take care of Celimé," said Jim anxiously. 'She's not very strong, L'Oncle Brabette. Get the doctor to see her without frightening her. I'd never forgive myself if anything happened to Celimé.'

"W'at you say? Malade !" L'Oncle Brabette

sat up. "Moder of she not very strong, too." He shook his head sorrowfully, as Celimé's little lattice opened, and she leaned out :

" 'And sing again, and sing again,  
And—sing—again—your—song—of—Deat' ! ' "

## CHAPTER XIV

### JEALOUSY

THE more Angela thought of young Mr. Fiske's sudden revolt from the silken fetters in which she had enmeshed him, the more she became afraid of herself, and being afraid, felt the immediate necessity of impressing upon Old Man that she feared nothing—not even herself. She came into the Sheriff's office at two o'clock the next day, after cautiously watching young Mr. Fiske stride homeward.

He walked with his head in the air, his feet spurning the ground. There was a majesty of demeanour about Jim which more than ever convinced Angela that if she stayed much longer at Four Corners, she would marry him and settle down by the river for the rest of her days. And then farewell the social aims, the distractions of polite society, the successes which made ambition virtue. All that she needed to bring the world of Montreal to her feet was—money; and the one man in the



world who could help her to find money was Old Man. She had heard many people profess an astounding contempt for money; she was instinctively aware, although Old Man said nothing, that he had a hearty contempt for it too.

As she came into Old Man's office, Angela thrust back the gathering tide of her passion for young Mr. Fiske, told herself that she would have none of it; at the same time, she omitted to ask herself why she had watched him pass with beating heart and a half smile on her pretty lips. Old Man fancied that he knew everything, could foresee everything. Very well. She would try his prescience, but she must be wise with the wisdom of the serpent. Those eyes of his had a trick of boring through one like a gimlet.

Old Man chuckled softly to himself at seeing Angela enter with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. In the course of a long and observant life, he had gradually acquired a large wisdom in dealing with the gentler sex. Nothing it ever did surprised him in the least. He was always prepared for the unexpected, because, as he said, he expected it.

At the same time, there was no denying that Angela, much as he loved her, was a trifle difficult even to her best friends. She wanted to be happy, yet was doing her best to make happiness impossible.

On the other hand, he, Old Man, must make it possible. Acting on this assumption, he received her with a lamblike docility and pleasure which ought to have put Angela on her guard.

Angela, however, was not on her guard. She was bent on humbugging herself and Old Man alike with regard to her feelings for young Mr. Fiske, and at once plunged into the subject with an eagerness which warned Old Man that it was a matter of life and death to her.

"Has Mr. Fiske left for the day?" she asked indifferently, yet sitting down in Mr. Fiske's seat because he had sat there. Her hand rested on the blotting-pad in a manner which was almost a caress.

"Yes," said Old Man drily. "He's earnin' his bread by the sweat of his pen up here, and the sweat of his brow down yonder; and, take it by and large, I dunno which is the harder. If he stays up here to copy writin's and earns a dollar, the Pilgrim's bound to put in two dollars' wuth of damage down there, unless I've got him in tow. The cheques which the Pilgrim's made over to me must be wuth, on the face of 'em, thirty thousand dollars. He can't buy ten cents wuth of candy 'ithout givin' a hundred dollar cheque for it."

"Dearly as I love the Pilgrim," Angela admitted,

"I think his arrival here was a little inopportune. I also have received large sums from him—on paper."

"I dunno as I'm sorry he's come, for all that," said Old Man thoughtfully. "I dunno as I'm sorry. It's put heart into the boy. He was fightin' the world alone. The Scriptur' says it is not good for man to be alone. It's 'stonishin' how well some gals knows that part of the Scriptur's, and does their best to obey 'em."

"It doesn't say anything about boys, though," flippantly suggested Angela.

Old Man disdained to notice her remark.

"I could have saved Jim a lot of things, but I judged it best for him to find 'em out for himself."

"It was very cruel of you, Old Man."

"Maybe 'twas, and maybe 'twasn't. If I thought for him all the time, he'd ha' quit thinkin' for himself, which ain't good for nobody."

"Have you been doing any thinking for me?" coaxed Angela.

"Any! I'm wearin' myself to a shadder a-thinkin' how to make things easy for you."

"And you have thought of something, Old Man—you have thought of something? When you think, you—you can't help thinking of something."

"Jusso, my dear—jusso."

"It's useless your trying to look like the Sphinx. You've hit upon something, Old Man?"

Old Man made no reply.

Angela got up and laid one pretty hand upon his coat sleeve.

"Old Man, think me a miserably mean, selfish girl if you like, but if you could tell me that you know where Julius Drex's money is to be found, I should be the happiest girl in the world, because I know you would take me to it."

If she expected Old Man to launch forth into a passionate denunciation of her selfishness, to appeal to her better nature, she was disappointed, for he did nothing of the kind.

"You're bound to git this money?" he remarked casually. "It's the thing you want most in the world?"

"The very most," protested Angela. "Dearly as I love you, Old Man, if you can tell me Julius Drex's secret, I will love you even more."

"Seems," Old Man communed with the ceiling, "a pity to throw away so much love on an old trunk like me when there's—"

"Oh, but you are so wise—so wise, Old Man. There's a—a ripeness of experience about you which makes you more than interesting," purred



this daughter of Eve. "Young men are so foolish. They think they know everything, and they know nothing; they are so—so impetuous, and domineering, and masterful; and shout at one, and appeal to the stars, and are cruel, and—and altogether horrid because a poor maid can't marry a poor man."

Old Man's eyes twinkled.

"Some of 'em knows a purty gal quick enough. It does take a purty gal to teach 'em wisdom; but they learn quickly." His gaze leisurely wandered from the ceiling to the lovely maid before him. "S'posin' I was to say as I knew where to find Julius Drex's treasure, would you agree to be blindfolded if I took you to it?"

"Certainly." Angela was a little mystified.

"And swear never to go back to the place agin?"

"Yes, if I may take away all the gold I can carry."

"Jusso," Old Man conceded. "All the gold you *want* to carry away."

"Of course I should want to carry away a good deal," mused Angela. "Montreal is an expensive place to live in. I should like a house on Sherbrooke."

Old Man nodded abstractedly. "Then I'll tell Jim to come with us."

The girl gave a little cry of terror.

"No, no! He is the last person in the world to come with us. Don't let him come, Old Man. Don't let— Can't you get Ikey?"

"I could; but he wouldn't be a mossle of use—not a mossle."

"Why?" Angela's breath came quickly. "Why do you want young Mr. Fiske?"

"It's a rough trail, and gold's heavy to carry," suggested Old Man indifferently. "You and him was pretty good friends once, when he was hellin' round in them beautiful clothes of his?"

"Of course we were friends."

"His clothes ain't so smart now."

"Old Man, how dare you! How disgraceful! Do you think that his clothes would make any difference to me?"

"'Pears like it."

"You are quite mistaken," Angela declared, with dignity. "Mr. Fiske and I are friends."

"He wants a lot in his friendships," Old Man suggested. "People as he cares for can make him do most things. People he don't like can't make him move."

"Of course not. His is one of those true, strong, stead—" She stopped in confusion.

"Eh?"

"I was saying that he has a strong nature, but not a presumptuous one, except—except when he—when he gets excited."

She smiled as she remembered the episode of the handkerchief.

"No, he don't presump enuff sometimes. Come to think of it," suggested Old Man meditatively—"come to think of it, if a man and a maid cottons to one another, there ain't nothin' to be ashamed of."

"Of course not, Old Man. Therefore, if this young Mr. Fiske and Celimé are inclined to marry, I could perhaps help them."

Old Man's face lighted up with a pleased smile.

"She'd make him a durned good wife," he said enthusiastically. "And she knows a lot about stock. 'Tain't allers them pretty painted butterflies as stands cold weather best."

"Then you think"—Old Man turned his gaze to the ceiling again to avoid seeing Angela's face—"you think, Old Man, that he would be happy with her?"

"'Tain't what I think; it's what he thinks. She's a good girl and a pretty one, and seein' as there's no one else, he couldn't do better. She'd look arter the Pilgrim and keep him out of harm's way."

"A man doesn't marry for that sort of thing. He marries because he loves a girl, not for mere sordid considerations such as—"

"Prezackly," said Old Man, as if the subject bored him. "Ain't you a bit hard on Celimé?"

"I! I don't understand you. What have I in common with her?"

"You're both wimmen, but she ain't had your chances. She can't hold herself in, same's S'ciety folk do. When she takes a likin' to a feller, it's for good and all, and she—she's sore stricken, as the Scriptur's puts it," mournfully returned Old Man. "Jim don't seem to see it; but I've known her since she was a bright-eyed, brown-legged little thing that high, with a laugh like a silver bell, and a voice as beat the bobolink's. She's a pretty sick girl now," he added significantly. "Not eatin', and watchin' for someone as never comes, 'll do a lot to drag the life out of you."

Angela was startled. "Do you mean—"

"There, there; never mind. Things seem to be in a sort of circle," Old Man declared absently. "You runs away from Jim, he runs away from Celimé, and you all runs to me to straighten things out. If you'll meet me to-night a mile outside Four Corners, on the road to Carbery, we'll go and git this



fortune, and you can start for Montreal the day arter, if you've a mind to."

Angela ruthlessly thrust aside the vision of Celimé ill, starving of heart-hunger, and nodded eagerly.

"I will meet you to-night, Old Man, if you will take me to the Marble City."

She threw her arms round Old Man and kissed him. Old Man accepted the salute with becoming modesty. Angela could not help thinking that if by any strange combination of circumstances young Mr. Fiske had been in Old Man's chair, he would have displayed more enthusiasm. This brought her back to the thing which was troubling her.

"Is it absolutely necessary that Mr. Fiske should go with us?"

She lingered upon the threshold in an uncertain kind of way, as if to force the responsibility on Old Man.

Old Man nodded.

"In course! The way's pretty rough. Ikey ain't strong enuff to help. Jim's the only other man in Four Corners as I'd trust within sight of that gold."

"You are sure there is plenty of gold, Old Man?"

"Plenty."

"Then why didn't you take some for yourself?"

## The Marble City

"'Tain't mine to take. When I wants anything, I earns it."

There was a quiet dignity about Old Man which warned Angela that she was on dangerous ground. She went away, treading upon air, and yet with certain inward misgivings which she could not wholly conceal. It was so miserable to be poor. Old Man was poor, but did not seem to be miserable, except when the sorrow of others cast a shadow over him. Gold! Gold! Gold! She tried to remember the old rhyme:

"Whereunto is money good?  
Who has it not lacks hardihood.  
Who has it, has much trouble and care,  
Who once has had it, has despair."

She would risk the "trouble and care." The possession of money meant no more teaching of unruly youngsters, no more dwelling in Four Corners. Money meant Montreal, New York, Paris, London. She would visit them all in turn—do all that was to be done, see everything that was to be seen. She—

Celimé brushed hurriedly past, her dark eyes looking unnaturally large in the sunshine. Angela stopped on the side-walk, her heart filled with a jealous pain. When she (Angela) had gone, young

Mr. Fiske would remain and marry Celimé. He would—marry—Celimé!”

She turned and ran after Celimé.

“Are you ill? I am so sorry! Can I do anything to help you?”

Celimé, not trusting herself to speak, looked at Angela with mute, imploring eyes, then hurried onwards, with the tears rolling down her cheeks. Angela could have faced scorn with scorn, repaid anger with anger, disdain with disdain; but this child's sorrowful face (she was only eighteen), with its hollow cheeks, from which the pretty colour had fled, the thin form, the listless step, smote her with a sudden pang. If she herself went away, Jim would forget her. She again overtook Celimé.

“Celimé,” she said eagerly, “I am going away in a few days, never to return. But before I go, I want to say to you that I have been very unkind, and I hope you will be very, very happy.”

Celimé's eyes turned to her with rapt wonder and delight.

“You mak' to go away? To go away!”

“Yes, I am going away.”

“To leave M'sieu Jeem?”

“To leave 'M'sieu Jeem'! Good-bye.”

She turned abruptly away, and left Celimé standing

there. When she looked round at the corner of the street, Celimé was kneeling on the side-walk.

Angela went up to her room and stood there, tense, rigid, silent. What had she done? What had she done?

"I—I am going away," she said, wondering why her lips were so parched and dry. "I am going away. I am going away."

Someone knocked at the door a few minutes later. It seemed a few minutes later, but it was four o'clock.

"Coming," she said hastily—"coming!" And looked at her white face in the glass.

"It is done now," she declared to herself. "It is done now. Of course, I'm a fool to regret it. It was the best thing that could happen. I should have been a wicked, heartless wretch if I hadn't done it. The girl will die if she doesn't get him. Die! It's horrible to think of it! Die!"

Why were the tears running down her own cheeks? They were certainly not tears of happiness at the thought of this fortune which was to be hers.

"After to-night," she said to that white face in the glass—"after to-night, we shall meet no more. I have told Celimé that I am going away. Going away! I've been horrid to everyone, and they will all be delighted to see the last of me."



Angela, shaking with painful sobs, threw herself on the bed. She had made her choice—had been called upon to make it at a moment's notice. If she could only hold out for a few hours. If! She and young Mr. Fiske would be together for hours—together in the hushed silence of the Bush, when heart speaks to heart, when God's voice is in the very air and will not be denied. But she had told Celimé that she was going away.

Ah, there was a girl worthy of him—a girl who would die for him. Celimé had no misgivings. Her love had not brought her happiness; but she had accepted it as a cross to be borne, even though the burden killed her. If Jim did not marry Celimé, Celimé would die—die of unrequited love. Pshaw! People did not die of unrequited love nowadays. "Men have died and worms have eaten them; but not for love." The girl was hysteri—

Then Angela gave it up. Circumstances had battered in her final defences; she would not lie to herself any longer. She had told Celimé she was going away, and go she must!

## CHAPTER XV

### THE MARBLE CITY

ANGELA dressed herself in a neat riding-habit, a relic of former prosperity, and, as soon as everyone else had strolled down to the wharf, slipped away through the darkness.

As she hurried along, carefully keeping in the shadows, she wished that she could think of some way of escaping this rendezvous with Old Man, renounce her ambitious aims, become once more the simple village "school-marm," with no other object in life than to elevate the ideas of her youthful charges.

Once or twice she halted irresolutely, her brain awlirl with wild projects which faded away again before assuming definite shape. Was she indeed running away from herself? Was there no going back? She had told Celimé that she meant to leave Four Corners, and she must keep her word. Of course she had given her word; there was no escape

from it. Was it better to break her word and be unhappy for a little while than to keep it and be miserable for the rest of her life? Would no casuist come to her rescue, and find a way out of the difficulty?

She swished viciously at the bushes with her whip. Why should she show consideration to Celimé at the risk of making herself unhappy? Unhappy! Ought she not rather to be grateful to Celimé for giving her such an excuse? She decided that she was grateful to Celimé—very grateful; then bit her lip, and hurried on. The sooner this wild expedition was over, the sooner would she be able to go away. Such a position was too ignominious to be endured any longer. From the very beginning, she had been Celimé's unconscious rival—the rival of a habitant girl. The shame of it! The ignominy!

She hurried on, and nearly ran into the arms of young Mr. Fiske.

"I beg your pardon!" said Angela hastily. "I am looking for Old Man."

"He's somewhere about," stammered young Mr. Fiske, whose courage seemed to have evaporated. "You look surprised. Didn't you know I was coming?"

"Oh, yes—of course—I— Where is the Pilgrim?"

It is very good of you, but do you think you ought to leave him?"

"He's quite safe, thanks, and sends you a couple of cheques for the — the usual amount. Ikey's looking after him to-night."

He handed her two little slips of paper.

Angela felt grateful to the Pilgrim for his unconscious aid in tiding over a somewhat difficult situation.

"Do you think Old Man has forgotten?" she asked lamely.

"No, I should say not. He never forgets anything."

Then they both looked helplessly at one another, and young Mr. Fiske wished Old Man a thousand miles away.

Old Man, with an unseemly disregard for this unexpressed wish, leisurely emerged from the bushes. He seemed to be in no hurry to start.

"We've three hours' ridin' afore we reach the secret track," he said; "then I'll have to blindfold you both."

"What for?" indignantly asked Miss Drex. "We're not children. Can't you trust us?"

"'Tain't that," Old Man affably declared. "S'posin' you've to take your Bible oath some



day as you don't know where the place is, you can do it with a clear conscience if I blindfold you. Nobody can't make you tell, not even if they was to blow your brains out."

"Make us tell! Who'd want to make us tell?" asked Angela.

"Plenty of folk," said Old Man, "if they once got wind of this yer little expedition. Time we was off, if we don't want to have all Four Corners arter us."

"Very well," said Miss Drex resignedly, recognising the futility of further argument. "You know best, Old Man. Of course, you always do. Where is my horse? You didn't tell me to get a horse."

"You're goin' to ride in front of me," said Old Man. "That grey horse not bein' used to folks on his back, has a trick of brushin' 'em off agin' anything as comes handy, or you might ride in front of Jim."

"Tha-ank you! I will come with you. Help me up, please, Old Man," said Angela, with flaming cheeks.

She fancied, even in the dusk, that young Mr Fiske had suddenly said something to the grey horse about his peculiarities which was the reverse of a blessing. Ride in front of— Her cheeks flamed.

"'Twouldn't ha' bin for more than three hours,"

apologised Old Man; "but that grey won't stand one rider on his back sometimes, let alone two. Still, if you'd like to try?" He paused expectantly.

"Certainly not!"

Angela felt that her voice sounded ridiculously weak. Why did not young Mr. Fiske indignantly decline this preposterous proposal instead of saying masculine things to the lymphatic grey? Even at that critical moment, she was amazed at the fluency with which he "gave sorrow words." She must really stop him somehow. Perhaps the best way would be to ignore Old Man's stupid remark.

"Reach down and lift me up, please, Old Man," she said, with chilly dignity.

"Cert'nly," said Old Man; "it's one of the privileges of age, so to speak, as Parson Trail says when he sits next the nicest gal at a picnic."

He reached down and swung Angela lightly in front of him. A touch of his heel on the mule's flank, and the expedition started through the odorous gloom of the summer night, Jim plodding steadily behind on the grey, and gravely imperilling his immortal soul by the language he addressed to that stolid animal.

With Old Man's strong right arm around her waist, her head leaning on his shoulder, Angela

rode on as in a charmed dream. Old Man's other hand was actively engaged brushing aside the branches which swayed in front of them. The resinous breath of the pines, knee-deep in lush grasses, the trickle of running water over rough stones, the scurry of frightened little animals through the undergrowth, the intoxicating, spicy air, the crackling of a dead branch, the lambent glow of touchwood from a decaying stump, churring of low-flying night-jars, screams of a wild cat seeking its mate—all combined in one strange medley to steal away her resentment at the caprices of Life and Fate and Circumstance, as the mule, with swift, easy amble, bore her onward to Julius Drex's golden store.

From time to time young Mr. Fiske, who had apparently forgotten his sudden wrath, gently uplifted a tender tenor, and declared to the vague darkness, although the resilient branches smote his upturned cheeks, that he arose from dreams of "Thee" in the first faint hush of night, when the moon was shining clear, and the stars were shining bright. But as the moon had not yet risen, and the stars were invisible through the dense foliage, the inconsistency of such a statement was palpable even to Old Man's appreciative ear.

When young Mr. Fiske further mentioned that a spirit in his feet had led him, without his being in a position accurately to explain the circumstances, "To thy chamber window, sweet," Angela could feel Old Man give an incredulous start.

"Does he mean the gal's sweet, or the winder?" asked Old Man, in a gruff whisper. "If I'd known he was goin' to make all this fuss, I'd ha' brought Ikey along."

But, gradually experiencing the subtle influence of the solemn gloom, young Mr. Fiske ceased his vocal remarks, and wondered inwardly why Old Man deserved the honour of supporting Angela on the mule. He felt sure that he could have done it better himself; but at the bare possibility of such a thing, his pulses tingled, the blood rushed into the apple of his throat until he almost choked. Angela's dark habit hid her from him.

As they gained the heart of the Bush, the silence became intense. The hoarse breathing of the venerable grey in his reluctant efforts to keep up with the mule, the jingle of the latter's bit, the tap of Old Man's rifle-butt against his stirrup, reached him with startling distinctness. If it had not been for the grey's objectionable habit of brushing people off his back, Angela might have been with him.



With him ! The disappointment was so maddening that young Mr. Fiske rammed his solitary spur into his horse's venerable flank, an indignity which the grey promptly resented by kicking with all his might and main.

When the grey quieted down and went to sleep again, compelling Mr. Fiske to hold his head up with aching arms, a crescent moon shone faintly over the tops of the trees.

Old Man, awaking from a protracted reverie, called a halt, and lightly dropped Angela to the ground.

Mr. Fiske found himself bowing confusedly to Angela, as she brushed a wandering tendril of hair from her eyes and drew a long breath of delight. They were in the centre of a little flower-strewn glade. All around them rose the impenetrable ramparts of the Bush. Impenetrable? Surely Old Man must know a way out.

"Interval for refreshments, same as they has at Quiltin' Bees," said Old Man, producing a satchel. "Chicken fixin's and doughnuts, and nothin' to pay, and no collection neither 'for our dear brothers as is ministerin' to the heathen in their blindness.' Some of the heathen's a good deal wider awake'n our blind brethren."

They sat down, and Angela, who was really

hungry (in her distress she had not thought of supper), found the chicken and ham very acceptable. From time to time she noticed that young Mr. Fiske nearly choked over his food.

Old Man, with the gratuitous statement that fingers were made before forks, took a drum-stick between his strong white teeth, although Angela, ignoring young Mr. Fiske's prior claims, entreated him to have the other wing.

"'Twouldn't be nat'ral," declared Old Man, as he gave the mule a nip of whisky in the hollow of his hand—" 'twouldn't be nat'ral. When I was a boy, no one ever give me nothin' but chicken legs, and in time I got to b'lieve as hens was all legs. 'Twouldn't seem nat'ral, nohow."

After the hurried meal was finished, Angela fell on one knee beside a little spring which gushed from a rock in the centre of the glade, and, dipping her rosy palms within the ice-cold water, slaked her thirst.

Young Mr. Fiske, kneeling beside her, ostensibly for the same purpose, felt that the moonbeams were a benediction on them both. He stole a glance at Angela, who looked very pale and haughty in the moonlight. There was a suggestion of antagonism in the way she shrank back a few inches when he

twisted up a big leaf and brought her more water to drink.

Old Man, smoking a leisurely pipe, as he, too, bathed in the moonbeams, suddenly smiled. Full well he knew there was

“ . . . A dangerous silence in the hour,  
A stillness which left room for the full soul  
To open all itself, without the power  
Of calling wholly back its self-control.”

He turned away and busied himself with the mule. Angela should not live to reproach him that he had given her no opportunity of choosing the better part. He need not have troubled himself, for, in the subtle intoxication of the moment, young Mr. Fiske and Angela had forgotten everything except themselves.

It seemed to Old Man, still busying himself with the mule, that they were in no hurry to rise. Angela involuntarily permitted herself to look at young Mr. Fiske. This was the hour of farewell, of renunciation. With a little firmness, she could get it over; then for ever bury it deep in her own heart. But it was difficult to shake off the fascination of his eyes as they sought hers.

Old Man disappeared in the shadow of the pines. The glamour of the moonlight was on them both. They drew nearer to one another, their lips met.

A moment later, they started back, abashed, confused, their hearts beating fiercely, their lives glorified.

"How dare—" began Angela.

"You are so beautiful!" he pleaded. The words ended in a long-drawn sigh.

"So beautiful," murmured the branches; "beautiful," tinkled the streamlet, burying itself in the soft mosses at the other end of the glade; "beautiful," whispered the flowers at their feet. Such a moment could never come again to either of them.

Angela turned away, to find Old Man with his back still towards them.

"Isn't it time we started?" she asked feebly.

Old Man, turning round, produced a couple of large white silk handkerchiefs.

"Borrered 'em from Mrs. Ikey," he explained proudly. "Quite clean, too." He seemed profoundly amazed at this fact, as he bound Angela's eyes. "Does seem a shame to hide 'em," he murmured apologetically.

For once, Angela was grateful to him. She was afraid lest her eyes should betray her.

Young Mr. Fiske, completely dazed by his recent experience, submitted to be blindfolded without a murmur. He dare not look at Angela, even though



she could no longer see him. He was a swaggering swashbuckler—a thief; and yet he knew that he could not have helped himself.

“Bring me my horse, Old Man,” he said, in a gruff whisper. “You didn’t see anything?”

“See anything! Not a durned thing.” Old Man was apparently wrapped in deep cogitation, for a daring scheme had suddenly presented itself to him. He drew young Mr. Fiske up to the mule and guided him into the saddle. “For your life, don’t let Angela know,” he whispered. “You can’t manage that grey blindfolded. You’ll have to ride the mule, and Angela ’ill ride in front of you.”

He brought the mule up to Angela, and made young Mr. Fiske reach down towards her. The next moment she was in his arms and seated comfortably in front of him.

“Ah!”—Angela gave a sigh of satisfaction—“Old Man, this is comfy!” She nestled her cheek against young Mr. Fiske’s shoulder.

“You can talk to me, but I can’t talk to you,” said Old Man, standing on a boulder so that his voice sounded close to Angela’s ear.

After this base deception, he set off in front of her, leading the grey.

An hour later, they emerged from the Bush by a

winding path which led along the side of a high bluff. Angela could hear a shallow river babbling over the boulders a long distance below. The night air made her drowsy, confidential ; she babbled, too.

"It *is* nice to lean against your shoulder, Old Man. You're so strong. You haven't any of the doubts and fears which beset a poor maid torn between—between things. You needn't grunt in that unsympathising way. All you men never do understand what luxury means to a girl. A man is strong, and can rough it ; the thousand little things which worry a girl mean nothing to him. You've had your stormy love-time, Old Man, and have tasted the joy of it, and it has become a dear reality instead of an impossible dream. But I've never allowed myself to dream. I'm so tired of all this squalid poverty, this perpetual drudgery ; I want to rest and do nothing. Just rest, see beautiful things and places, wear pretty dresses. I daresay it is a mean ambition, an ignoble one ; but I am not the stuff of which heroines are made. I couldn't bear to be a poor man's wife."

She felt Old Man start violently.

"So stupid of me," murmured Angela. "I must have scared the mule. Hold me tighter, Old Man. Don't be afraid. You weren't afraid before. Why, your hand trembles ! How silly of you !"

She went to sleep with the night air fanning her cheeks, with young Mr. Fiske's arms round her.

To feel Angela's exquisite form in his arms, and not be able to see her ; to know that her head was resting on his shoulder, her perfumed hair brushing his lips ; to think that she was sleeping like a little child, and that he must not explain his love to her ; to experience a thousand agonies lest she should wake again and make him the unwilling recipient of her confidences—all these considerations unnerved Mr. Fiske as he rode blindfolded through the night. This dear delight was all too dearly purchased. Her lips were so near, and yet a thousand miles away. Full of anguish, he cursed Old Man in round, set terms, and yet so gently that even Angela did not hear him.

For half an hour he rode thus, thankful that she still slept. When he thought of her waking, and the explanations which must ensue, not even his faith in Old Man could reassure him.

Meanwhile, Old Man, leading the grey, went forward up the steep hillside, until he came to another dense wall of cedars, reinforced by huge boulders, with pines growing in the interstices of the rocks.

"Looks like the end of the world," he muttered,

leading the grey up to a particularly sharp-edged boulder, and giving it a push.

The boulder swung back and revealed a narrow path. There was a dull thud as it shut to behind the mule.

Old Man cautiously led the grey through the intense darkness until he reached the little path leading to the bottom of the valley. He gave a sigh of relief as the Marble City gleamed through the trees. To all appearance, the place was as he had left it. There were its frowning, precipitous sides, the rapid river rushing along the bottom, the marble houses exactly as before. He looked round him with vast content at the silent city, its moss-grown marbles, its solemn splendour.

"If it weren't for them durned Four Cornerites as 'ud go bowin' down in the House of Baal 'ithout me, I'd spend the rest of my life here," he said. "A man can think here."

The necessity for immediate thought became apparent, for Angela stirred sleepily in young Mr. Fiske's arms. Old Man lifted her down from the saddle, not without a sigh of relief from young Mr. Fiske, and shook her gently.

"Where am I? Where am I?" asked Angela, instinctively raising her hands to the bandage.



"Not yet." Old Man breathed freely again. "Now I'll juss go and see everythin's all right here—there might be a bear or two about. You sit on this yer rock till I come back."

"But I'm afraid," protested Angela.

"Oh, I'll bring Jim alongside," said Old Man cheerfully. "Then if you both git skeered, you can holler. When I'm ready I'll come for you. I've got to fix up some candles and things."

He took the grey by the bridle and led him away.

## CHAPTER XVI

### RENUNCIATION

ANGELA and young Mr. Fiske sat side by side in the moonlight, their bandaged faces instinctively turned towards one another. For a time they listened to Old Man's receding footsteps as the grey stumbled along the rocky path. Gradually the sound became fainter, fainter still, and slowly died away. The ancient owl in the pine-top sent forth his melancholy "whoo-hoo-oo, whoo-hoo-oo," and made them shiver. They crept nearer to one another for companionship. Their hearts beat violently. They could hear the ripple of running water as it foamed along the narrow river-bed, the sighing of the branches, the solemn murmur of wind-swept pines.

Just as they began to recover their composure, again came the "whoo-hoo-oo, whoo-hoo-oo" of Minerva's melancholy bird. Instinctively their hands clasped; the warm contact comforted, reassured them both.

"Ah-h!" sighed young Mr. Fiske.

"Ah!" echoed Angela.

Neither broke the silence until the owl again sounded his warning note.

"It would give me the greatest pleasure in life to shoot that confounded bird if I could only see him," said young Mr. Fiske moodily. "It sounds as if he were jeering at us. What's he want to come interfering with us for?"

Angela found her voice.

"Perhaps we're interfering with him," she said weakly, then stopped as if afraid.

"I always thought Old Man sensible until now," rejoined young Mr. Fiske, viciously stubbing his toe against the base of the rock on which they sat.

"So he is. He is the most sensible man I ever met."

"Then why does he insist upon my keeping this thing over my eyes?" not unreasonably demanded young Mr. Fiske.

"He doesn't want you to see the way here."

"I don't want to see the way here. I want to see—"

"There's the owl again," hastily interrupted Angela. "It—it doesn't sound quite so fearsome now that I'm getting used to it."

Young Mr. Fiske repeated his remarks about the owl, then relapsed into happy silence.

"You're not very companionable," desperately suggested Angela, after a while. He could not see her face; therefore he could not know she blushed. "Don't you—don't you owe me an apology?"

"What for?" asked young Mr. Fiske, in surprised tones, as if it had never occurred to him in that light.

"For—for—by the—the spring in the glade."

"Don't talk about it. It's too wonderful to put into words," suggested young Mr. Fiske. "It was just a moment of madness, and I never want to be sane again."

"But there is so little difference in our ages," pleaded Angela weakly.

"Age has nothing whatever to do with these things. What's a year either way?"

"It is a great deal."

"It is, in one way! But you're heaps wiser than me. I—I've a confession to make."

"Ah! now you're coming to your senses."

"When I shouted those things at you on the wharf the other night, I was horribly afraid of you all the time."

"And I was afraid of you."



"I thought if I shouted at you, you would be sorry for me, and take pity on the madness which filled my life. I couldn't help it. I can't think of life without you. What is the good of living unless a man has someone to worship, someone to be his guiding star? I loved you the moment I saw you, and you were so cruelly kind, you treated me as if I were a good little boy, and not a man. I am a man," he said, rapidly forgetting his humility. "I am a man. Should I be a man if I hadn't this pain at my heart, although your handkerchief is resting on it at this moment? Every time I see you, my heart almost stops, then suddenly jumps on again; every time I don't see you, there isn't any joy anywhere. I go about cutting your name on the trees. I—"

"Hush!" she said softly. "Hush! You mustn't."

"But it's true." He let go her hand. "It's true, for all that. And now you are going to be rich. All that wealth for which Julius Drex died, for which he lies mouldering in his temple tomb here—all that will be yours."

"Yes," said Angela unsteadily, "all that will be mine."

"And you will go away?"

"Yes, I shall go away." Her words recalled the promise she had made to Celimé. She fully meant

to go away after this one hour of rapture and confession.

The young fellow restrained himself, and tried to speak calmly.

“Yes, you’ll go away. I’m chained down here, with my poor mad father to look after. I’m torn both ways. Old Man has been more than a father to me, watched over me, helped me, comforted me in my sorrow. I couldn’t be happy away from Old Man either. All the things one has ever read in books about love say that it fades away as quickly as it comes. I don’t believe it ; it’s a wicked lie of people who don’t know how to love, and thus try to excuse their own cold hearts. Love is immortal. You go stumbling blindly along a narrow rocky path meeting all sorts of obstacles ; but you don’t feel them if you can see someone you love waiting for you at the end of it. You don’t feel the pain of wounded feet, you don’t think of the sad nights and days, the hunger and cold and thirst, the weary watching, the lonely misery of it all, if she stands at the end of the path with shining eyes and outstretched hands. Nothing else matters—nothing—nothing—nothing !”

Angela trembled. How could she ever thank Old Man for his wisdom in keeping them both

blindfolded ! It gave her strength to resist, to endure.

“ You don’t think,” she said softly, “ of the woman at the end of the path, if she has been delicately nurtured ; you don’t think of what she must suffer, the thousand humiliations and shifts of poverty, the killing of love when its first mad passion is over. You don’t think of what the girl has to give up. It is only your own pain, your own longing, your own suffering which must be eased. You don’t understand the daily, hourly misery of it all for a girl when she has cast in her lot with a poor man.”

“ Ah,” he said confidently, “ that is what you think now. That is what people always fancy when they stand shivering on the brink. They don’t know that they have only to believe in love to make all its glories come true. They don’t know the magic of love—how it transforms things, how the poorest objects become beautiful, a mud hut a palace, the commonest weed a radiant rose, if seen with love’s eyes. There is a rapture and a glory in it which nothing else can ever replace. I didn’t know that I should get the chance to tell you this before we part.”

“ Before we part ! ” She was aghast. “ What do you mean ? ”

"I mean," he said fiercely, "I will never seek from any woman's compassion what she cannot give me through love. Here in this lonely valley, with only the all-seeing eyes of God upon us, I tell you that you are the woman I love. But even though you loved me again, I can never marry you. You are rich and I am poor—bound down to Four Corners by inseparable ties. You will go away into your own sphere, you will forget this little village, forget me, forget those who love you, live your own life, be happy until the novelty of it has worn off, and it seems a little hollow to you, a little insincere, a little unsatisfying. Perhaps some day, when you feel this, you will come back to Four Corners and think of what you have missed. But you can't be young twice; you can't feel then as you do now; you can't call back the past and live it over again."

"No," Angela panted, "we cannot call back the past and live it over again. Don't torture me any longer by talking about it. I know all this just as well as you do. I know all that you would say, but you must not say it."

"Why not?"

"You must not—must not—must not! I know very well that you think me a wicked, heartless girl, intent only on my own selfish happiness. It was



true once ; it isn't true now. I was heartless and cold until I met you. Then I began to thaw, to live, to listen for your footstep, to watch for you from my window. If you didn't come up to the village, it was just as sad for me as it was for you. There was no warmth in the sunlight, no joy in the air, no sweetness in the world for me until you came again. I did not know then what it all meant. I know better now—I know better now. I thought only of myself, and wanted gold, not knowing that it kills love, chokes all that is good in one—”

He smiled sadly. “It is power, happiness, delight.”

“Ah-h ! You say that !” Her voice was keenly reproachful. “I will have none of it. You love me ? Say it again as you have said it a hundred times before—you love me ?”

His arms felt for her, enclosed her, drew her to his heart.

“For all time, for all eternity, I love you—I love you—I love you !”

“Ah ! You love me—love me—love me !”

“I love you, dear heart, I love you ; but this money divides us for ever and ever.”

“I will have none of it,” she panted—“none of it. It would bring a curse with it. Poor was I when

I came into Four Corners; poor will I leave it—poor in all save one thing, and that is”—her voice sank to a hushed whisper—“that thing is love! Think of it in the days to come when I have gone away—”

“Gone away!”

“Yes, gone away. To-morrow, I am — going away.”

“Going away?”

“Yes—to-morrow. I have promised Celimé.”

“Why?”

“Because”—she drew herself from his sheltering arms—“because Celimé loves you.”

“You mistake—you don’t understand.”

“Ah, no,” she interrupted sadly, “I do not make any mistake. Celimé loves you. If you do not love her, she will—die.” The words came in a little hushed whisper. “Her blood would be upon our souls—she would come between us at the altar.”

“Die! Celimé—die!”

“She will die.” She felt for him again with outspread arms. “You will take this gold and make her happy. I am leaving Four Corners to-morrow.”

The young fellow was stunned.

“Leaving to-morrow! My heart—my heart, what

have we to do with Celimé? It is only a passing fancy. She will forget it."

"No, no!" Angela wailed. "She will never forget. I saw death in her face. It is not a passing fancy. She will not get over it. All my life I have thought only of myself—all my life I have sacrificed others; but if Celimé died, her pale face would haunt me, it would be a curse upon me. You must go to Celimé. Be good to her. She couldn't help it—she couldn't help it. And now that it is too late—now that the scales have fallen from my eyes—I cannot help it either."

There was silence between them. Angela drew back a little from him; her hands were stretched out in an attitude of renunciation, of farewell. He vainly sought her.

"I will never give you up," he said desperately. "Never! I love you. You are more to me than all the women in the world."

There was a little catch of tearless misery in her voice.

"Don't you see that this is my punishment? I will not touch this gold, I will have nothing to do with it—never return here. Take it, give it to Celimé, marry her, learn to shape your life anew without me. Forget this madness—forget me. Take me

in your arms, kiss me once more, and—goodbye.”

He took her in his arms, kissed her almost roughly, vowing that he would have none of this sordid gold, that he would never speak to Celimé again. Angela was his life, the joy of his heart, his dear delight; she did not know to what she was condemning herself.

She listened mutely, shivering a little. When his grief and despair had partially exhausted themselves, Angela slipped very quietly from his arms, and moved towards the river.

He followed after.

“Angela, what are you going to do? Where are you? Angela! Angela!”

“Stand back!” she cried warningly. “Stand back—stand back, and—good-bye!”

She leaped towards the waters of death with a wild cry which rang through the midnight air.

“Come back! Come back!” he cried in agony, tearing at the bandage which hid her from him. “Come back! I will do what you wish if you will only come back.”

A strong hand caught Angela by the shoulder, and drew her from the river bank.

“I didn’t orter ha’ left you two together like that,”



remorsefully declared Old Man, supporting Angela as young Mr. Fiske dashed water over her pale face. "Any fool might ha' known you'd git restless and wander round."

Angela opened her eyes and shivered, then buried her face in Old Man's shoulder.

Old Man patted her tenderly on the back, as if she had been a small child. He was frightened at the success of his experiment. Another minute, and he would have been too late to stay Angela's mad solution of the problems which perplexed her. He could feel her quivering as she clung to him, whilst young Mr. Fiske hovered round, suggesting a thousand impossible things.

"There, there, honey," Old Man said soothingly. "Now you're all right agin. Look round you. Ain't it beautiful? Did ye ever see anythin' like it afore?"

Angela sat up, cast one glance at the brawling river, and turned away her eyes.

"That's so—that's so," said remorseful Old Man. "That's so, honey. You juss look t'other way. There!"

He pointed to the moonlight shining down on the lichened marble. Time had stained and mellowed the Marble City with colours fairer than those of

any mortal palette. Little green ferns danced and nodded in the crannies of the roofs. Where the sun had struck the pillared portals, they were rosy in the moonlight. Nearer to the damp soil were golden yellows, deep rich browns; above them rose the white glistening slabs, as if newly quarried from the reluctant earth.

In gazing at these miracles of loveliness, Angela forgot her fears. - Now she could understand how Julius Drex, in the presence of such immaculate purity, had become pure also; how he had weaned himself from base delights, and turned his thoughts to God, praying that he should die a holy man.

"Come," said Old Man—"come;" and drew them towards the pillared temple-tomb at the end of the long street.

Angela followed him, faint, white, exhausted. Her one desire was to get away from the place, never to see or hear of it again. Once her foot touched a nugget in the path, and she passed on unheeding. Old Man bared his head, as if in the presence of Death, and motioned her to climb the marble steps.

Angela slowly climbed the steps as Old Man (he had discovered the secret of the moving panel) showed her where the door slid back into the wall.

He had ranged half-a-dozen candles in a row behind the marble throne. The pure white marble of the walls gave back the light, the floor shifted beneath their feet.

Looking down upon it, Angela caught the yellow gleam of gold. She was walking upon gold, ankle deep in it. It lay in every niche and cranny of the walls; there was a great yellow heap of it before the marble throne which filled the centre of the room. The seat of the throne was covered over with freshly-gathered flowers, and Angela instinctively knew that Old Man had hidden from her sight the bones of Julius Drex.

This was the lesson he had sought to teach her: the might of gold is powerless before the might of Death; the might of Death is pitiful before the power of Love.

Angela knelt down beside Old Man, in front of the marble throne. Young Mr. Fiske knelt beside her. From time to time they heard Old Man's petitions to the Giver of Life that they, His servants, might walk in holiness and righteousness before Him all their days. Then he arose and pointed to the gold; but their eyes were set on each other's faces; they did not see it.

"Choose!" said Old Man. "Choose!"

## The Marble City

He spoke patiently, quietly, with bared head before the majesty of Death, and they, hearing him as in a dream, passed into the moonlight, treading upon the yellow metal as though they saw it not. The jarring of the marble slab back into its place awoke them from their lethargy.

Old Man, taking their hands, led them to another place, wherein was heaped more gold.

"Choose!" he said again; and, still gazing on one another's faces, they turned away.

Near the top of the steep path, he showed them more gold.

"This is the last chance," he said solemnly—"the last chance. Blessin' or curse, take it or leave it."

They shook their heads.

"Shut your eyes," commanded Old Man, and again taking their hands, led them onward and upward. Something swung to behind them; they were walking downhill.

"You can look now," said Old Man presently. "Neither you nor me 'ill ever set foot in the Marble City agin."

All around them was impenetrable gloom. When they reached the bottom of the steep descent, Old Man mounted the mule and took Angela in his arms. She lay there very quietly, with closed eyes.



The day-star shone above them as they came out from the Bush into the road leading to Four Corners.

Old Man, looking tenderly down upon the lovely burden in his strong arms, saw that Angela's long lashes were wet with tears.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE PASSING OF CELIMÉ

CELIMÉ, lying in a hammock on L'Oncle Brabette's veranda, looked up at Old Man, who held her hand with awkward tenderness. Old Man, to ease his own troubled heart, affected to believe that she was not really ill, but only wanted petting.

Celimé smiled faintly.

"Ah, Ole Man, when I was leetle girl you pet me all de tam! Now, when I am so beeg, you help to break my heart."

"No, no," said Old Man huskily. "In a day or two you'll be runnin' about agin, and I'll take you on the river in my canoe, and we'll fish for—"

His voice stuck in his throat as he looked down upon her fragile loveliness.

Celimé reproachfully shook her head.

"I mak' one more row on de reever, Ole Man, but not wit' you. It ees nearly feenish, Ole

Man, and you have not mak' to t'ink of me at all."

Old Man was glad that Celimé could not see his face, for her reproach was perfectly true. He had not studied her at all in connection with "M'sieu Jeem," and now that she was nearing the Land of Silence, his heart filled with remorse that it had never even occurred to him so mercurial a temperament could feel deeply. Celimé, as bright as the painted butterflies which hovered over the gay little gardens of Four Corners, had seemed to him to flit from one love affair to another with a careless insouciance and light-heartedness which augured well for her speedy recovery from an unrequited passion; yet she was dying of grief—grief brought on by her love for young Mr. Fiske.

Old Man had become so obsessed by the inevitability of Angela's love for Mr. Fiske, and Mr. Fiske's for Angela, that he had not even for a moment imagined Celimé's fancy for the young Englishman would ever become a matter of life and death to her. Now, the keen, excitable soul had worn out the frail body; Celimé's mother, too, had died of consumption; and L'Oncle Brabette, hovering helplessly about the veranda, recognised the same symptoms. Even the "good tabac" failed

to console him. Under his breath, he cursed the bright-faced lad who was helping to worry Celimé into an untimely grave.

After the "School-marm Anglaise" had left Four Corners, it seemed to simple-hearted L'Oncle Brabette that "M'sieu Jeem" must of necessity cease to be a heretic, turn to the true faith, and marry Celimé—Celimé, for whom half the youths of the Ottawa Valley sighed in vain. But now, even fond old L'Oncle Brabette recognised that a mightier Wooer than all these was tapping at Celimé's door—a Wooer who would not be denied.

Celimé looked up at Old Man half-roguishly, half-wistfully.

"Ah, you verree clevaire, Ole Man, but you not know everyt'ing."

"I know enuff to know as I've bin pretty rough on you, Celimé. If ever I interferences agin in young people's love affairs, may I—"

Celimé put her thin fingers on his lips.

"Ah, non! Non, M'sieu Ole Man! You have de beeg, beeg heart, and you will go on so till eet ees all feenish."

She lay back exhausted. Old Man, gently swaying the bright-coloured hammock, felt how thin and frail she was, that she could not possibly



live for more than a few hours longer. But even as he gazed at her, Celimé's bright, mischief-loving eyes regained for a moment their former roguery.

"Ah-h! you match-maikare, M'sieu Ole Man. I want you to mak' somet'ing for me."

She did not see Old Man's anguish, how pitifully sad he felt about his lack of care for her happiness. As she said, he had never taken her seriously, had never considered what she must feel. It had always been Angela. For Angela's sake, he had allowed Celimé to suffer, although he had played with her when she was a little laughing baby, had ridden round the Square with her on his mule, laughingly accepting the neighbours' congratulations; and now he, the tough, wizened, strong man, was still hale and hearty, whilst this delicate flower faded all too soon: He fell on his knees by the side of the hammock.

"God knows I'm sorry, Celimé. It don't make matters no easier for you when I say I was so proud of my own cuteness, I didn't even think you were in earnest. Knowin' how quickly your fancy'd changed before, and what a proud little girl you were, I thought you'd turn elsewheres, where there was a dozen fellers waitin' to jump for you."

Celimé looked at him through her drooping lashes. Beyond Old Man, a green humming-bird hovered

over a fuchsia in a tub, its long bill probing the flowers, its wings fanning so quickly that it looked like a great emerald moth suspended in mid-air. A robin flew up to the Siberian honeysuckle close to the porch, dived into the dense foliage, and disappeared. The "screech-screech" of his third family that year came towards them, muffled by the thick leaves.

It was five o'clock. Old Man's mule, patiently waiting beside the veranda, with her nose nearly touching the ground, seemed half asleep.

Celimé motioned to Old Man to bring the animal nearer, and, as the mule sleepily opened her one sound eye, softly stroked the great velvet muzzle.

Old Man, understanding that this was a farewell caress, wondered whether the mule realised it also. With that subtle instinct which all animals have for approaching death, the mule shivered a little beneath the touch of Celimé's fingers, then put out her pink tongue, and licked them softly.

"Ah!" said Celimé, "she knows what will come soon. When I was just leetle bébé, she stand over me and touch me just so. She ees sorree for me."

Old Man tried to talk bravely, to divert her attention to happier things. When Celimé felt a little stronger, he would take her to some marvellous

hot springs which cured every ailment on the face of the earth. Soon she would feel happy again, strong again, forget her worries, and be wooed by some picturesque, red-sashed voyageur, who would bear her away in his birch-bark canoe up the happy streams until he came to the upland pines, and their sweet breath still further strengthened her troubled lungs.

Celimé, softly patting Old Man's gnarled fingers, smiled like a little child who listens to some oft-told fairy-tale which she would fain believe, although she knows it false.

Suddenly Old Man felt her fingers tighten on his wrist, as young Mr. Fiske came up the veranda, his hands full of fresh flowers. He trod softly, and his eyes were very sad.

Old Man rose awkwardly from his knees.

"My dear, my dear," he whispered, "I didn't think, I didn't know. I've crushed you, spoiled your bright young life, and I didn't see what I was doin'. I can't forgive myself, but if you can forgive me, it will make it easier for me by-and-by."

"Forgeef you! Ah-h! M'sieu Ole Man, eet ees verree easy. You would not mak' to keep heem from me any more—now!" She reached up, put her thin arms round his neck, and kissed him

good-bye. "W'en I am up dere, I will mak' to look t'roo de sky some tam, and see you and de mule, and de leetle, leetle bébé, Ole Man, and I will mak' whispaire to him not to fall into de Crick w'en ees fader ees away. And now, Ole Man, you must go home. I have not plaintee tam for M'sieu Jeem. Some day, you will mak' to comfort L'Oncle Brabette w'en I am gone away, and he say: 'Celimé! Celimé! Bring to me le bon tabac!' and Celimé cannot come."

"Make your mind easy, my dear. I'll look arter him. Ain't there nothin' else—nothin' harder—as I can do to help you along?"

"Not notin', Ole Man. Not notin'. Kiss your leetle bébé for me, and—good-bye. Soon I mak' to go sleep, for I am verree tired."

She clung to him with a sob, then tried to smile away her breaking heart.

Old Man kissed her very gently and tenderly, then, with downcast eyes and bent head, walked slowly down the street. It was a terrible thing to realise that his blindness had helped to kill this innocent child. Ever since attaining to years of discretion, he had prided himself upon his knowledge of women. Now, in her hour of sore distress, it was no consolation to him to remember that several times he had



seen Celimé on the verge of an engagement, and had always prophesied that she was too fond of L'Oncle Brabette ever to leave him. Hence he had laughed at her fancy for "M'sieu Jeem"; and she had laughed also, until her laughter turned to tears, her little feet trod the downward path of death.

He saw the mischief-loving eyes for ever closed to the sunshine, the blue skies she loved so fondly. Soon her ears would be deaf to the singing of birds, the murmuring maples which overhung the veranda. He heard the droning dirge of the censer-swinging acolytes, as all that had once been Celimé was borne to the little graveyard beyond Four Corners, and despairingly struck into the Bush, there to wrestle with his own soul, and intercede for Celimé with the unmoved God, who looked serenely down upon her grief. If Angela had never come to Four Corners, perhaps young Mr. Fiske would have loved Celimé.

He wandered onward through the spicy forest pines, crushed and sorrowing. The mule, slouching along by his side, from time to time rubbed softly against him, as if she too knew and understood. But Old Man was inconsolable. In his desire to secure Angela's happiness, he had made Celimé suffer. Now, the knowledge made him suffer also. It was all so clear—so very clear. Why had he, conscious

of his own sympathy with every living thing, failed to stretch a helping hand to this poor child, drifting into the darkness with the dying day ?

Jim gazed after Old Man with heavy eyes, knowing that the latter was sore troubled. He had such confidence in his mentor that he could not understand how this grievous state of things had come to pass. As he looked down on the dying girl, he knew that he had always been very fond of Celimé, that he would have been fonder still had she not cared for him so much. But the hand of Death was on her ; in common with the rest of the world, he began to realise that when Death smites we see so clearly all that it is too late to see.

He turned away his eyes from Old Man's retreating figure, and came back to Celimé, who watched him wistfully, yet with all the brief joy of possession.

Angela was far away. Soon, too, she would be far away ; more remote even than Angela ; but until then, he was with her. The sanctity of approaching death diminished her fears. It was sweet to know that he grieved for her, that, although he could do no more than take her hand, and come down with her to Death's shore, he would mourn when she began her journey—that journey which we must all make—alone !

But he was with her now. For the time being, he was wholly hers. She called him to her, with a soft little cry :

“M’sieu Jeem ! M’sieu Jeem !”

“Yes, dear.”

The lad came close to Celimé, knelt beside her, raised her in his arms, gently dropped his freshly gathered flowers upon her lap.

Celimé gave a cry of content.

“Ah-h ! Dat ees good ! M’sieu Jeem ! M’sieu Jeem !”

She lay, nestling her head against his shoulder—her beautiful black hair strayed softly over it, brushing his cheek ; one arm stole around his neck.

Jim was the first to break the silence. “Celimé dear, you forgive me ?”

Her fingers played with his hair.

“Forgeef ! Ole Man say dat. Forgeef ! You are so strong—so strong.” She had always worshipped his strength.

“Celimé !” he cried passionately, “if I could only give you my strength, and take your weakness upon me, God knows I would gladly do it. The world has been very cruel to you. I have been cruel ; Old Man has been cruel ; we have all been cruel. We loved you, and we did not know how much ; we

shunned you when you needed our love ; and now you are going to leave us."

" I do not want to go. Ah, no !"

" Don't go away from us, Celimé ! Don't go away. Let us make a fresh start, begin all over again. You won't go away ? You see how sorry we are, how we weep to know what grief and pain we have given you."

" You must not mak' to feel sorree, M'sieu Jeem. I am verree happy now. You will come to see me some tam, and put your hand on de green grass, and I will talk to you, oh, so quietly ! and some day she will come back, and—"

" Don't, dear—don't ! If you will only stay with us, only forgive us, we will never grieve you any more, never be unkind to you again, but make you as happy as the day is long. Why, even my poor father tried to tell me how much he misses you, and has written large cheques for me to bring you. You won't go away, dear ? You remember how good you were to me in my sorrow. Let me help and comfort you now. Oh, if we could only begin again—only begin over again—only undo the past !"

Celimé stroked his cheek softly ; she was so happy that death had no terrors for her. That he could weep for her, that he would never pass the place



again without thinking of her, that he loved her and thought kindly of her, that he held her in his arms as his tears fell fast upon her face, filled her whole being with content. She gave a long-drawn sigh of happiness, of exquisite joy.

“Eet ees so good you are wit’ me ; you are sorree for me ; you mak’ to cry for me. Now I can go. Eet ees so warm and bright, but de dark comes soon. To-night, I shall not mak’ to cry myself asleep nevaire any more.”

“Celimé ! Celimé ! Every word stabs me.”

As her thin arm clung more closely round his neck, he bent his ear down to her lips and listened, for her voice was very faint.

“Eet ees good-bye—soon. Verree soon, M’sieu Jeem ! Tak’ me in your strong arms, and row me over de reever. I must go soon. I want to hear de rapide, see de mountains, watch de red sun sink, den I am content.”

He took her in his arms, light burden that she was, her cheek still happily resting against his, and carried her to a boat upon the shore, L’Oncle Brabette laboriously shuffling behind them. When he had carefully put Celimé into the boat, L’Oncle Brabette—the tears running down’ his face—pushed into the current, and they floated downward toward

the Falls, the sunset glory tinging the water as with blood, the fiery orb itself poised over the melancholy mountain peaks.

But Celimé lay, dreamily happy, her eyes shining, her arm around Jim's neck.

"Bimeby," she murmured, "one beeg white angel come over de reever, over de Falls, for me. He will tak' me in hees arms to le Bon Dieu ; I will lay my flowers at le Bon Dieu's feet, and He will forgeef us all. Forgeef us all ! De beeg white angel ! Don't you mak' to see heem, M'sieu Jeem ? "

"No, dear ; it is only the foam of the Falls."

"But he ees flyin', flyin', flyin'. All de tam he mak' to beat hees wings."

"It is only a bird, Celimé—only a bird. Don't tremble, dear. I hold you fast."

"Ah, yes ! hold me fast, M'sieu Jeem. Hold me fast." She struggled up a little. "See ! Eet ees along de reever. We're under de shadow of hees beeg white wings. Mebbe he wait for you to geev me to heem, M'sieu Jeem."

"It is only the shadow of the willows on the island, Celimé. Rest, dear, rest ! We must go back. The sun sets fast."

Celimé raised herself in his arms.

"Ah, non, non ! I cannot go back. Eet ees all

feenish. All feenish ! Hold me. Hold me, M'sieu Jeem ! I hear de beeg—white—wings—”

She lifted up her tender lips to his, touched them. He held her gently to him.

With solemn sweep of widespread wings, the big white angel came to bear her spirit to the Sunset Land.

The sun dropped down behind the melancholy mountains ; darkness, like a pall, swept swiftly over the sky. Creeping across the water, growing nearer and nearer, as L'Oncle Brabette turned the boat towards the shore, came the sound of the death-bell, where the Curé waited for his dead. Celimé had received the last rites of the Church ; that she should die in the arms of a heretic was a grievous thing. Therefore, the old Curé waited until the boat grounded on the sandy shore, and stretched out tender hands to take the dead girl's body into the keeping of Holy Church.

But “ M'sieu Jeem,” with Celimé's face still hidden in his breast, walked on as though he saw him not, passing the crowd of kneeling villagers with bared heads. When he came to the village street, he climbed the steep veranda, passed through the outer room, and brought Celimé into the upper chamber consecrated by her prayers for him.

Gently he laid her on the little bed, and knelt beside it, mourning bitterly.

. . . . .

The Curé supported L'Oncle Brabette's feeble steps through the darkness.

"Courage, mon brave, courage! The good God sees all, understands all, forgives all, pities all."

L'Oncle Brabette shook his head.

"Mais oui, M'sieu le Curé, mais oui! You have geev her de good-bye message, and she mak's to sleep, my little Celimé, she mak's to sleep; but I am old, old man, and eet ees verree dark."

The Curé pointed to the first pale evening star.

"Courage, mon brave, courage! She wings her flight to God."

"Mais oui, M'sieu le Curé, mais oui! But I am old, old man, and eet ees verree dark!"

They faltered homeward through the night.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### FORGIVENESS

OLD Man halted by the gate and nodded gravely to the Pilgrim. During the past two years, the Pilgrim had become a little stouter and a good deal healthier, although his mental condition did not vary one jot. The only change seemed to be in his appetite, which was enormous. Indeed, Parson Trail's clothes no longer fitted him, and he had reluctantly doffed clerical garb for the homely yet more suitable attire of the Bush and the farm. He evinced a great respect for the photograph of himself which hung up in the living-room of the hut, but always spoke of it as "The Gentleman's father." Jim, as Jim, had altogether faded out of his broken life. He was very fond of The Gentleman and the old grey.

The grey, taking advantage of this affection, made it an excuse for loafing round with the Pilgrim instead of working. With others, he was still

irreclaimably vicious ; with the Pilgrim, he became absolutely reasonable, and always brought him back again in safety from his strolls through the Bush. He did not like the Pilgrim's habit of putting little children on his back, and knotting his already sufficiently tangled mane with flowers. Still, in consideration of surreptitious feeds of corn whenever the Pilgrim was able to get at the corn-bin, he endured even this ignominy. If possible, he was the greyer of the two.

As for the Pilgrim, beyond an occasional distaste for his own homely garb, he had not a care in the world. Though his mind was a blank, he did not know it. The fresh air, good food, the healthy outdoor life, renewed his physical vigour. He might live for another ten years. With a few bright feathers, or half-a-dozen children round him, he was perfectly happy.

Old Man looked at him and smiled, for the Pilgrim was deftly repairing a model canoe, which belonged to one of the village youngsters.

" Jim inside ? "

" The Gentleman is not inside. The Gentleman is milking those unreasonable cows," said the Pilgrim gravely. " Will you sit down, Mr. —— " A troubled look came into his blue eyes. " Mr. —— ? "

"Sheriff," suggested Old Man. "We was out together day afore yesterday."

"Ah, yes; to be sure, Mr. Sheriff. Is it necessary, Mr. Sheriff, to milk cows every day, Sundays as well?"

"I reckon so," Old Man admitted. "Milkin' 'em relieves 'em of a burden; and the better the day the better the deed."

The Pilgrim stopped mending his canoe, his blue eyes clouded over with perplexity.

"I ask you because they are such unreasoning animals—they have no intellect. Now, Mr. Sheriff (I think you said your name was Sheriff)—now, Mr. Sheriff, let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that you are a cow, and have been relieved of your burden. Wouldn't you have more sense than to accumulate a fresh one the next day?"

"I hadn't looked at it in that way. Mebbe you're right."

"Of course, I'm right. You see how simple it is. Then why should the silly creatures go on troubling themselves to produce butter and milk and things?"

"I give it up, Pilgrim. I dunno, and they don't neither."

The Pilgrim smiled triumphantly.

"I will tell you. Because they're cows; that's the reason."

"I'll go over to the barn and ask Jim," said Old Man, feeling that he was getting into deep waters.

He made his way through a yard full of cows, and found Jim milking a refractory animal which declined to yield its burden in the open. The sweet breath of the kine filled the air; the milk spurted into the pail with a pleasant sound.

Jim, bronzed and muscled like a Hercules, did not turn his head until the pail was full. Then he looked round with a hearty nod, patted the cow's dappled flank, and turned her loose.

"Now, I must feed the calves. You'll lend a hand, Old Man?"

Old Man lent a hand with grave tenderness. When the ravenous little beasts had satisfied their hunger, Jim put his arm within Old Man's, and lingered a moment on the threshold of the barn.

"I was hoping you'd turn up. The Pilgrim's going strong. I've never known him so active."

"Bin doin' anythin' wuss'n usual? Last time I had him out with me, he loosed the handcuffs off a man I was bringin' down to gaol, and it took me



two days to find him agin. Seemed quite proud of himself too."

Jim laughed.

"No, nothing much. He never loses a chance of taking more corn for the grey. That old rascal doesn't do a stroke of work unless dad walks alongside, so it's easier to let them both loaf. Then they're thoroughly happy."

He spoke lightly, but there was a certain gravity in his manner which did not escape Old Man.

"Wimmen's work, ain't it?" asked Old Man, following Jim into a cool dairy. "Come to think of it, a man t'other side of the river was tellin' me to-day 'bout a thing he calls a separator. You pours the milk down it, and turns a handle, and in ten minutes the cream comes out of one spout and the milk out of another. D'you b'lieve it?"

"Oh, yes! You feed the skim milk to the calves, and it saves waiting so many hours for the cream to rise."

"Sorter rough on the calves, a-skimmin' their nat'ral nourishment. Cursed be he that moveth his neighbour's landmark. How'd you like it, if you was a calf? I s'pose it 'ud save you a lot of trubble to have one of the darned things. The Pilgrim 'ud enjoy turnin' the handle the wrong way, and sendin'

the cream down the calves' throats 'stead of the skim milk."

"They're expensive, you know. I could do very well with one, it would save me a lot of time; but what with the new cows, I haven't much money in hand. You"—he turned suddenly to Old Man, as they came in sight of the Pilgrim—"you haven't any news of Angela?"

"Juss come back from seein' her."

"You've just come back! You've seen her! She's well, and—happy?"

"Oh, she's well! A bit thin and pale. I've seen her happier, by and large," said Old Man, in curiously indifferent tones.

"Do you think she'll ever come back here? Two years is a long time. One can bear a lot in two years."

"We'll talk about that arter supper. I s'pose you ain't trained the Pilgrim to cook yet?"

"Poor old dad can't concentrate his mind on anything for long; that's what's the trouble with him."

"I can." Old Man reached up for the frying-pan. "I ain't a swagger cook like Ikey, but I can worry through a meal."

He set about preparing the evening meal, whilst

the Pilgrim went in search of flowers wherewith to brighten the table, and came back with an ancient egg which he had found beneath a bush.

"It is the gift of Providence," he solemnly declared. "Kindly boil it—boil it hard, Mr. Sheriff."

Old Man saw the egg was addled, and dexterously substituted another when the Pilgrim was not looking. The Pilgrim ate it with great satisfaction.

"It—it improves the flavour of an egg when it has been born in the open air. Don't you think so, Mr. Sheriff? Perhaps you will kindly boil me a few more."

Old Man boiled four others. He noticed that Jim ate little.

When the simple meal was over, and the Pilgrim had gone back to his canoe, Jim looked round to see that all was well with the stock, lit his pipe, and put on a coat. Old Man, motionless as if carved in stone, sat smoking by the porch.

Neither of them spoke. When Old Man had finished his pipe, he knocked out the ashes, and replaced it in his boot. There was a dreamy silence in the air, only broken by the occasional whistle of the saw mill on the other side of the river, and the puffing of the little steamer as it fussed up to the wharf. "Peter Piper picked a peck of pepper.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper," noisily declared the steamer paddle-wheels. Through the bushes, they could just see the form of a solitary fisherman seated in a canoe by one of the timber booms.

"Time we started?" asked Jim.

"I was wond'rin' whether you'd remember what day it was."

"Remember!" A shadow crossed the young man's face. "I went over to Carbery this morning to get the red roses that she loved. She died two years ago to-night."

"I've picked her a posy of wild flowers from the heart of the Bush. Arter all, she loved them best."

"Shall we drive?"

Old Man shook his head.

"Better walk. 'Tain't more'n a couple of miles, if we cuts across the Bush. Darned if the old mule ain't come along too. I tied her up, but there ain't no knot can keep her, if she's a mind not to."

The mule stood patiently waiting for them under the shadow of the trees. When they joined her, she gave just a rub of her soft muzzle against Old Man's coat, and slouched along beside him in her customary matter-of-fact way.

They struck into the Bush, the mule every now



and then crashing into a hollow log and kicking herself free again. Old Man steered by the stars, and brought Jim through a stately grove of sugar maples. Beyond the maples ran a sandy road ; beyond the road, and guarded by a zigzag fence of cedars, was the burying-place where slept the rude forefathers of Four Corners. Save for the gleam of a white marble cross here and there, it looked like partially cleared land, fast being seeded again by the pines at the back. But as they drew near, they could see narrow paths running round the various clumps of trees. Huge boulders outcropped from the rocky soil, the air was sweet with the fragrance of myriad flowers.

Old Man said something to the mule. She dropped her head disconsolately over the fence, but did not attempt to follow him.

With bared heads, the two men walked slowly along the sandy path. Suddenly, Old Man stopped.

"You go first. I'll come presently."

The young man went on alone through the silvery moonlight. He turned the corner, and there, nestling beside a huge rock carved with Celimé's name, was the green mound, with sweet syringa at the foot, a rose-bush at the head.

Jim knelt down beside the grave, and touched the green grass tenderly.

"Is it well with you, Celimé?" he asked; and a ripple ran through the grass, as he placed red roses on her breast.

He bent his head again.

"There is nothing to tell you, Celimé. Perhaps you know all the struggles of the year, the patient endurance, the effort of keeping a smiling face towards the world, the loneliness, the watching and waiting for someone who does not come, who may never come; the praying to the unseen God to make one worthy of her if she came."

A sigh rose from the grass.

"Perhaps," the young man whispered—"perhaps, Celimé, it is all clear to you now. You have forgiven us for our sin against you; you know that since your going we have missed you sorely. We did not know how much we should miss you, until you went away. The boys come to comfort L'Oncle Brabette. Soon—very soon—we shall bring him to you here. But he, too, has forgiven us our blindness, our neglect. He wants to see Angela, and she does not come. My heart, too, is sore for Angela, but I cannot go to her. Some day, perhaps, when the Pilgrim has fallen asleep, and all the world sleeps

too—some day, perhaps, you will whisper to Angela : ‘Go to him ! go to him ! I have forgiven. He was only a boy who worshipped you, and did not know the wrong he did me until it was too late.’ ”

Again the soft ripple in the grass, an answering sigh, which thrilled the young man’s heart.

He gathered a rose from the little bush.

“ Help me, Celimé ! ” he implored. “ I can’t understand things. The more I try, the harder they get. I am groping blindly, trying to live worthily. You, who have passed through all the anguish and the pain of earthly love, and rest secure within God’s holy peace, tell me how to live too. Teach me how to suffer and be strong, to walk the ways of life in hope and trust that all will yet be well. And if I should never see Angela again, if she has passed out of my life as you have passed out of it, teach me to bear that also, even—that ! ”

There was a light rustle on the grass, someone knelt beside him.

“ Teach us,” breathed Angela’s voice—“ teach us to bear the ills of life together ; watch over us, make us worthy of your forgiveness, for the sake of that Christ who bears the burdens of us all.”

She took his hand in hers, and placed them both upon the little grave. He felt unseen lips touch

his own, heard again Celimé's faint whisper come to him through the nodding grasses : " M'sieu Jeem ! M'sieu Jeem ! "

" She has forgiven us ! " he murmured. " She has forgiven. "

" Yes, " said Angela, looking into his eyes. " She has forgiven us ; and all the ways of life are plain before our feet. "

. . . . .

They returned to Old Man, their faces shining. " She has forgiven us ! She has forgiven. "

Old Man blessed them, and went away to strew the little grave with flowers. When he came back, although the trouble had gone out of his face, he spake no word until they reached Four Corners.

" Here, " he said, halting outside the village — " here's where we parted when I brought you from the Marble City. "

" My eyes were wet with tears, I did not see, " murmured Angela.

" You didn't see the yellow gold, your eyes were blind with love, " said Old Man, his grim face relaxing, as he handed each of them a little book. " Whiles you were blindfold I took two sacks of gold and buried 'em outside—one each. The money's in your names at the Bank of Montreal. "



"Why—why?" faltered Angela.

"It's a hard life," said Old Man, "fightin' Nature by the river-shore, and witherin' afore your love-time comes. I'm an old man, and I know. When my time comes, and I ain't here to look arter you, I'll be buried atop of Prophet's Hill, the mule aside me, rifle in hand, all ready for the last journey. If things is wrong, and all the ways of life is hard to bear, there ain't nothin' to cure you like the mountains and the river and the Bush. God's nigher to you in His pine-tree temples, He can't miss you on the mountain-tops. And so, the money 'ill help you to stay here; it 'ill help you to keep love warm within your hearts; it 'ill help you to help them as can't help themselves; and it 'ill help you to forgit what I can't never forgit till I'm carried over to the hill-top yonder. I've shot my man in fair fight, and thought no more about it; but I can't forgit—Celimé! There! there! It's time I left you to yourselves a bit. Good-night! Good-night!"

He strode away, followed by the mule. The moonlight rippling on the tin roofs of the little white houses turned them into silver seas. From the habitant quarter came the faint music of Old Daoust's fiddle, the sound of merry voices.

“To-morrow,” Angela whispered softly — “to-morrow, we will comfort him, and meet again.”

“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow !”

“Good-night !”

“Good-night, dear love !”

“Good-night !”

“Good—night !”

THE END

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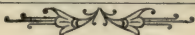
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By the late B. L. FARJEON

Author of "Aaron the Jew," "The Betrayal of John Fordham," etc.

It is probable that this will be the last of the late Mr. Farjeon's novels to be published. It is outside the ordinary run of his books and likely to attract notice. The story is told by a prison doctor and is concerned with a woman convict, a lady who had not willingly done wrong, but, who has been controlled by her husbands hypnotic suggestions; she has the power of second sight and is terrorized by her husband's attempts to make her reveal a secret regarding their young daughter. The Doctor befriends her and discovering that his will is also strong to influence others sets himself in opposition to the husband, and thereafter there is a struggle for mastery between the two men, one working for good the other for evil. Other characters are introduced, and the daughter who, like her mother gets into states of trance, is the centre of interest.

# The Marble City

By G. B. BURGIN

Author of "The Shutters of Silence,"  
"The Hermit of Bonneville," etc.

Mr. Burgin has earned a reputation by his Canadian tales and it is in Canada that the scene of his new novel is laid. It is a love story in which two women love the same man, a young stranger, "Jim," who gets a footing at Four Corners and is befriended by "old man." The Marble City lies near, half buried and known only to an Indian or two and "old man." About it there is treasure which causes trouble, and one of the best scenes in the book is that in which Angela desirous of wealth accompanies "old man" and Jim to the City to take back all the gold she can carry yet leaves it all to enrich herself still more with Jim's love.

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# The Three Essentials

By DOROTHEA GERARD

Author of "The Blood Tax," etc.

Although at first sight Madame Longard de Longgarde's new novel might be classed as a bright society story, a closer examination reveals something which is almost serious enough to be called a purpose, and the book might, perhaps, more fitly be described as a drama masquerading as a comedy; but throughout the story it is the little face of Eugenie Lebrun, who manages to be both *piquante* and pathetic, that is the guiding star. Whether there are three essentials or only one, and what that one is must be left to the reader to discover.

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# The Secret of Wold Hall

By E. EVERETT GREEN

Author of "The Silver Axe," "Olivia's Experiment," "Where There's a Will," etc.

Miss Everett-Green is a practised writer. In her new novel the story really begins with her heroine's marriage, more out of duty to her father than for love of the man, about whom there is a mystery which helps to keep husband and wife apart; but there is a satisfactory ending to a well told story, which is pleasing throughout, the character of the man being attractively presented.

# The Rebel Wooing

By J. A. STEUART

Author of "The Minister of State," "The Eternal Quest," etc.

Mr. Steuart in his new story makes a special study of his characters, most of whom are Scots, and tells an interesting story. The love (which is reciprocated) of a young minister for the daughter of a rich elder, who remains obdurate to their sentiments, forms the basis of the book, and threads it from the first page to the last; but there is a subsidiary love story helping the interest. Primarily the novel is a penetrating study of Methven as minister and man, and it is doubtful whether the author has ever done anything so well; but the rich elder himself and others are so faithfully portrayed, that it would be hard to choose which interests most. The book will appeal to all who appreciate sound literary work.

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# The Sixth Sense

By ADELINE SERGEANT

Author of "The Mistress of Quest," "The Idol Maker," etc.

This novel, completed by Miss Sergeant but a few months before her lamented death, contains some of her best work. It opens with a family of young people, whose means are small, but Janet, the eldest daughter, succeeds in keeping the home together until the discovery that her brother Walter is heir to family estates in the possession of his cousin. The latter and his mother have living with them a Professor who possesses hypnotic power, and a girl Fenella whom the Professor influences and uses. The cousins meet and like one another, but the Professor through Fenella makes mischief. Complications follow, and Walter is trapped. There are several love-stories running through the book, which is full of interesting characters.

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# Guthrie of the "Times"

By JOSEPH A. ALTSHELER

Author of "Before the Dawn."

This is a vigorous and stirring tale of politics and newspaper life, and "Guthrie," the main character and a fine figure, is a keen resourceful and honourable American. The story of his achievements makes the best sort of reading. It should be added that the story also has it's feminine interest.

# Mr. Chippendale of Port Welcome

By CHARLES FELLOWS

A book that will cause a hearty laugh is always welcome, and many a one will be got by a study of Mr. Chippendale. He is a character after the style of Mr. Micawber; he is always going to succeed but never does; his wonderful schemes and projects lead to nothing, yet he is a most plausible theorist, plays his parts well, and is always keen to start afresh with the most innocent confidence; he is excellent company, a wonderful talker, and will, no doubt, prove a very attractive character to a large number of readers. The story is more a narrative than a novel. It stands by itself as a one man book with his accessories; but a love interest is introduced with Mr. Chippendale's daughter. The real basis of the story is the dumping of the unfit in our Colonies, and the Author using Mr. Chippendale as an example, shows what material the Colonies have had to deal with.

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## A Prima Donna's Romance

By F. W. HAYES

Author of "A Kent Squire," "The Shadow of the Throne," etc.

In his new book, Mr. Hayes departs from historical romance and gives a modern story, which is not, however, without its adventurous side. The principal characters are two sisters, the supposed daughters of a Greek brigand. Their love affairs, through the intrigues of their "father," run anything but smoothly, involving as they do many risks on the part of their lovers. A leading, and one of the most interesting characters of the story, is the real father, who quite ignorant of his relationship, continually stands by the girls, but the key to the story is not given until the end, the interest being sustained from start to finish. The scenes are laid in England, Paris and Athens. Gambling, thieves and brigands are introduced, and most of the principal characters are at sometime in peril of their lives.



# Aunt Phipps

By TOM GALLON

Author of "Tatterley," "Bodens Boy," etc.

Olive Varney, the principal character of this story, has been trained by her father to believe that for a wrong done to him by another man, it will be just and right for her to be revenged on Lucy, the young and innocent daughter of that man. Being able, by a chain of circumstances to impersonate an aunt of Lucy's lover, Olive obtains access to the house in which the lovers reside and commences her work. But Olive is not all bad, and is swayed first by her father's dying command, and then by her own better feelings, with the result that a tangle is created, which is made worse by the machinations of a would-be lover of Olive, and by the existence of the real Aunt Phipps. How the tangle is unravelled, and Olive made the good angel of the lovers must be learned from the book. It is sufficient to say that it is in Mr. Gallon's best vein, and that, despite her bad beginning, Olive earns for herself the same sympathy which the author's famous "Tatterley" compelled, for all his many faults.

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# The Middle Wall

By EDWARD MARSHALL

Author of "Lizette," etc.

*With illustrations by* LOUIS F. GRANT

Henry Parton goes to South Africa and discovers diamonds. He comes home with them and having foolishly assigned them, temporarily as he thought, to his mother to appease her desire for a show of affection, finds himself in difficulties with his step-father McFadden, who strives to secure the treasure. Parton is helped by Norah the ward of McFadden, and finds himself aboard a vessel owned by Captain Burgee, who befriends him and outwits the lawyer stepfather. On board Parton also finds an old and bitter enemy: the diamonds are lost in an extraordinary way and as marvellously recovered, and after many strange happenings the end is reached with the marriage of Norah and Parton. It is an uncommon and remarkably good story of adventure, and Captain Burgee who takes a leading part is a most amusing character: he is full of good stories and wise sayings, and his subtle humour cannot fail to please many readers.

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